

QUEEN · VICTORIA

A · PERSONAL · SKETCH

BY MRS. OLIPHANT







"YOUR MAJESTY."

FROM THE PICTURE BY MARY L. GOW, R.I.,
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QUEEN VICTORIA

A Personal Sketch

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MRS. OLIPHANT

ILLUSTRATED



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THE DOMESTIC LIFE OF THE QUEEN

BY
MARGARET OLIPHANT,

Author of "Royal Edinburgh," "The Makers of Venice," etc. etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE LITTLE PRINCESS.



THE accession of Queen Victoria to the throne of the United Kingdom was in many respects like the bringing in of a new dynasty. We might almost say that the house of Hanover came to a conclusion in the family of George III. That monarch himself was the first Englishman of his family, a man of much domestic virtue and singularly free from many of the characteristics which made it hard for the English, and still more hard for the Scots, to adopt and naturalise the new race of kings, who were foreigners in every particular of their lives, speaking English with a strong German accent (which, curiously enough, has never been entirely eliminated from the speech of their descendants), and carrying that flavour of the Teuton into all things about them.

But his sons who were to succeed him broke away from that tradition of humdrum virtue which had been established during his long reign, and which had pleased the mass of the people so greatly as to close its eyes to much mischievous political action on his part. A crowd of unrestrained young men, however, whose debts had continually to be paid, and whose lives shocked those same masses whom their father had done so much to conciliate, had shaken that kindly realisation of royalty which the very number of the king's family and the dulness of his domestic life had established in the country. To have many children, to walk in your garden surrounded by this "fine family" in the sight of your admiring subjects, to rise early and go to bed at ten o'clock, are virtues which the English public of that day, the powerful middle class especially, which was beginning to make its way to the front of

affairs, appreciated highly. But the Prince Regent and his disorderly court, his unlucky marriage and all the scandals that surrounded him, and the irregularities of his brothers always coming before the public, and most generally with demands upon the national purse to accentuate the record of their errors, destroyed those family ideas without placing anything more worthy in their place.

George IV., though reputed the First Gentleman in Europe, and sometimes exhibiting certain royal graces of manner, was a man for whom even his friends could say little; and his brother and successor, William IV., if happier in some respects, notably in his marriage with a good woman, was less gracious and less mannerly, without being much more virtuous, than his predecessor. All this was calculated to bring the Royal House into sad decadence, and did so, notwithstanding occasional outbursts of that wonderful and apparently inexhaustible loyalty which seems, all historical events notwithstanding, to hold stronger sway in our national character than in that of any other European race. Strong, indeed, must that visionary principle have been when staid Edinburgh, with so great a man as Sir Walter Scott at its head, lost its senses altogether in a delirium of joy and welcome to receive King George when he went northwards. Yet even Sir Walter Scott would no doubt have acknowledged in sadder moments that many King Georges of that calibre would have ruined any royal stock.

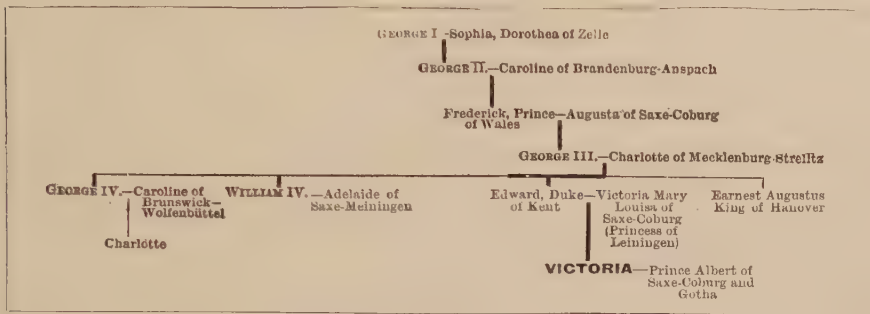
After such representatives of royalty as these, the appearance of a young woman upon the eager and curious world, so young as to be unconscious of most of the dangers before her, unacquainted even with anything but the simplest holiday aspect of a life from which she had been as much secluded as was possible in the circumstances, gave to history one of those picturesque touches which form its highest lights. Everything was possible to so young and untried a creature, a mere girl, not much over childhood, who might have been so easily drawn away into primrose paths of extravagance and folly, and yet might be the inauguration of a new age—the mistress of hearts, the first in goodness as in place. Who could tell in what way the balance would turn? We feel the thrill of the suspense, the movement of doubt and fear, as we look back upon that tumultuous world, in which modesty and wisdom had not hitherto reigned in high places.

But now we know: and it seems wonderful that there ever could have been any doubt on the question.

It was a new dynasty, the Victorian line which thus began. The Hanover cortège swept away into the darkness, completing a record not beautiful nor noble, though perhaps necessary. And the Maid of England stepped forth, bringing with her all the lessons of self-abnegation and high patriotism, and that perfection of moral training, which a woman's education was fitted to give. No doubt the actors in that drama of life were to a great degree unconscious of the greatness of the change, for most things seem ordinary

enough while they are in course of carrying out. They saw the piquant contrast of the pretty and innocent little figure, the delightful appeal of the young royal eyes for instruction in the details of her official duty, the soft voice and girlish grace, with the *brusqueries* of the Sailor King and his predecessors, and took pleasure in it, as every spectator does in the advent of a child.

They felt, too, that same wonderful contrast of extreme youth, simplicity, and inexperience with the position and duties thus suddenly devolving upon the young Queen, but nobody anticipated the marvellous changes that



GENEALOGICAL TABLE SHOWING THE QUEEN'S DESCENT FROM GEORGE I.

were coming in with her, the new ideal, which was almost a revelation of what a monarch ought to be.

In the year 1818 the Royal Family of England was not in a happy or prosperous state. Seldom before or since has there been less comfort in the prospects of any such house. King George III. was in seclusion, bowed down with incurable disease, while his son, the Prince Regent, had all the uneasiness, without the prestige, of the head that wears a crown. Of the other members of that large family—fifteen sons and daughters, most of whom were still living at that period—not one had a successor to come after, a legitimate heir. It is needless to enter into the state of affairs which had brought this about. The sons of George III., when they loved at all, had not loved as they ought. Wilful young men, brought up in a house which, though virtuous, was dull, by arbitrary parents making little allowance for youthful fancy, they had either plunged into dissipation or had fixed their choice upon unroyal ladies who could not be received as their lawful wives, possible mothers of a future sovereign; and for twenty years the sole hope of the Royal House had been Princess Charlotte, the only child of a most unhappy marriage, but in herself a sweet and promising young woman, with many claims upon the tenderness and sympathy of the nation. So long as she lived, all national requirements were satisfied on the point of heirship. She married wisely and happily, not only making

an admirable choice for herself, but bringing forward unawares out of the obscurity of princely life in Germany, and from amid a crowd of petty princes equally distinguished and undistinguished, a family which for a long time held a greater place in the affairs of Christendom than perhaps any other—the family of Saxe-Coburg Gotha. Prince Leopold, the first of this family to be brought forward in modern times into a position of European importance, was also the first to show the great faculties of the race, combining the quietest and most unostentatious private life with great devotion to public affairs and that political penetration and sagacity which make a statesman, as much as an eye for form and colour make an artist; and everything bade fair for the happiest royal life that England perhaps had ever known.

The historical student, looking on after these events, might well set forth this brief chapter as holding the same place as a sketch for a great picture, as if the mighty Artificer of the world had tried the combination first in a momentary episode before touching the larger, more permanent canvas. As Victoria and Albert were, a generation later, so were Charlotte and Leopold in 1817—a good, true, honest, and noble-minded pair, setting up a pure household, a high standard of life in the midst of the careless England of those days, in which dissipation was more wild, and vice more undisguised, than now. The spectacle of conscientious royalty working hard at its noble occupation, without ambitious thought or desire either for aggrandisement or added splendour in its own person, was something new to the world—too fine an experiment, perhaps, to be worked out all at once. But in little more than a year the essay ended, the young household was broken up, and all those beautiful hopes came to an end. Princess Charlotte, with her new-born baby, died, carrying away with them all the promise of the race. It is true that there were still many royal dukes following in the succession; but not one descendant of the second generation now lived to carry on the house. It was an emergency not only most startling and terrible, but absolutely unexpected; for the happy marriage of Princess Charlotte seemed to have settled matters in the most satisfactory way.

It is a curious evidence of the panic caused by this event that three of George III.'s sons married immediately, the necessity being sweetened to some of them by the payment of their debts—an act so often repeated in the history of the time. Of these marriages, the most important was that of the Duke of Kent, the fourth of the royal brothers, who married in May, 1818, having then reached the mature age of fifty-one, Victoria Mary Louisa of Saxe-Coburg Gotha, a sister of Prince Leopold, Princess of Leiningen by a previous marriage, a young widow with two children. The Duke of Kent was one of the most respectable of his family; no scandal concerning him was ever brought to the knowledge of the world. He was

a soldier, and took more interest in his profession than was at all common in those days. Having been treated very austere in his youth, and brought up in the most severe way, chiefly abroad, he was sent to Gibraltar on his entrance into active life, and put in command of the 7th regiment of infantry, known as the Royal Fusiliers. But he made himself unpopular, we are told, in an unusual way, by insisting upon drill and discipline, till he got the name of a martinet, and it was judged wiser to remove him. He was,

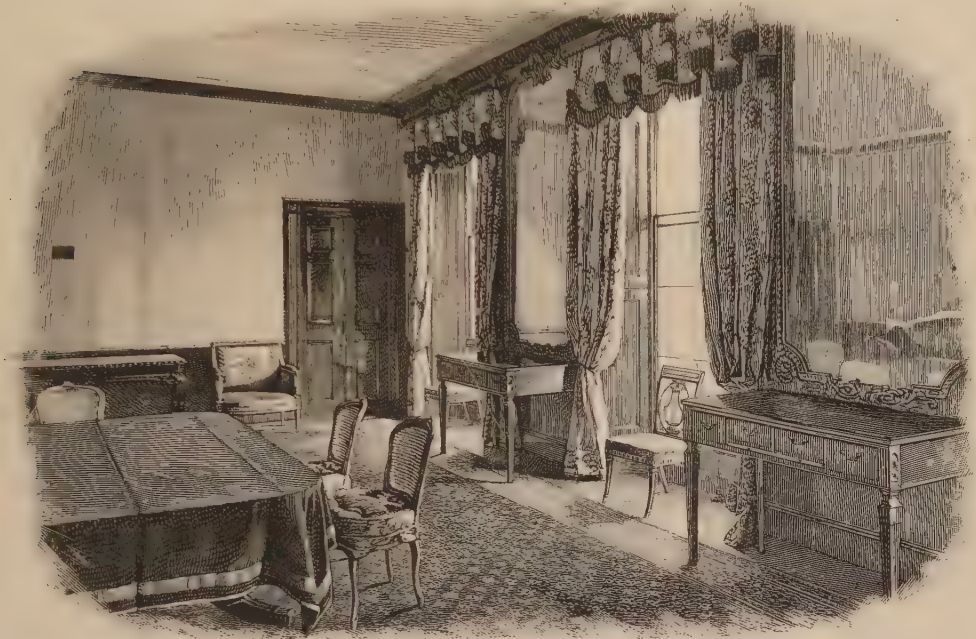


Photo: Russell & Sons, Baker Street, W.

APARTMENT IN KENSINGTON PALACE IN WHICH THE QUEEN WAS BORN.

however, so much of a reformer that he was the first to abolish flogging and to establish a regimental school. He afterwards served in the West Indies, and was honourably mentioned in despatches at the taking of Martinique and Santa Lucia. In 1798 he returned home, and, having been up to this time merely Prince Edward, was then created Duke of Kent and Strathearn and Earl of Dublin, all the three kingdoms having a share in his title. A year or two afterwards we find him in Gibraltar again, sent on a special mission to restore discipline, the garrison being disorderly; but apparently he carried his measures too far, for there was a mutiny on the Rock, and things did not go well. Probably it was from this circumstance that the Duke was recalled to England, and he does not seem to have been employed again.

This brief official record does not throw much light on his character;

but it is something that the sins charged against him were on the side of virtue, and that it was probably an enlightened desire for the welfare of the army, if hindered by severity, that was the great motive of his life. He must have been possessed of a certain enlightenment, for we find him voting for Catholic emancipation, and taking part in the management of many benevolent societies. He had also the strength of mind and sense of justice which enabled him, when he found himself incapable of paying his debts, to give up all his different sources of income into the hand of his creditors, he himself retiring to live with the utmost economy abroad. Then occurred the sad event already referred to—the death of Princess Charlotte, which left the throne without an heir. It is little likely that a bachelor of fifty, a good deal tossed about the world in his day, and with scarcely any means, should have looked upon marriage as a very desirable step, but he joined his two brothers in making this sacrifice for the good of his country. These royal dukes thus rushed into wedlock, as they might have charged an enemy, together.

The Princess of Leiningen was much younger than the Duke of Kent, but already a mother and experienced in life. She was thirty-two, with a son and daughter to bring up, a highly educated and judicious woman, who had filled her place so well in her previous marriage that her husband, at his death, had left her the sole guardian of his heir and regent of the little principality. No doubt the influence of Prince Leopold, who himself had just lost by his wife's death what would have been the highest position in Great Britain, furthered the union, which might secure to his sister a position very like that which he had himself lost; and the match was in every way a suitable one. Both were illustrious by birth, the Saxe-Coburg family being one of the oldest in Germany, but neither was rich. They settled down at first at Amorbach in Leiningen, the residence of the Princess, but came to England in the spring of 1819, that their child might be born on English soil. The Duke, however, did not long survive this great revolution in his life. His welcome in England was not perhaps so warm as he expected, and Government did not encourage his efforts to improve his financial circumstances. He was about to return with his family to Amorbach, to spend the rest of his life in the dull formality of a little German residency, when the other change came which breaks up all mortal plans. He died when his child was but eight months old, on the 20th of January, 1820, leaving his wife for the second time a widow, to fight her battle with the world alone, training her boy to rule over his little principality and her infant to be the sovereign of a very different and magnificent heritage: but in the meantime a stranger, poor and without friends, in what to her was a strange land.

The Princess Alexandrina Victoria was born within the homely brick walls

of Kensington Palace on the 24th of May, 1819. She alone of the little group of royal children born in that year was English by actual birth. The present Duke of Cambridge and the late ex-King of Hanover, the son of the Duke of Cumberland, were both born in Germany: and so was a hapless baby who would have stood first among them had she lived, a little daughter of the Duke of Clarence, who was first in succession to the throne. It would seem that Providence had decided that England was certainly to have a Queen, for the short-lived children of William IV. were all girls. But they died one after the other, in infancy; and though it was by no means certain at the time of the Princess Victoria's birth that she would be the future

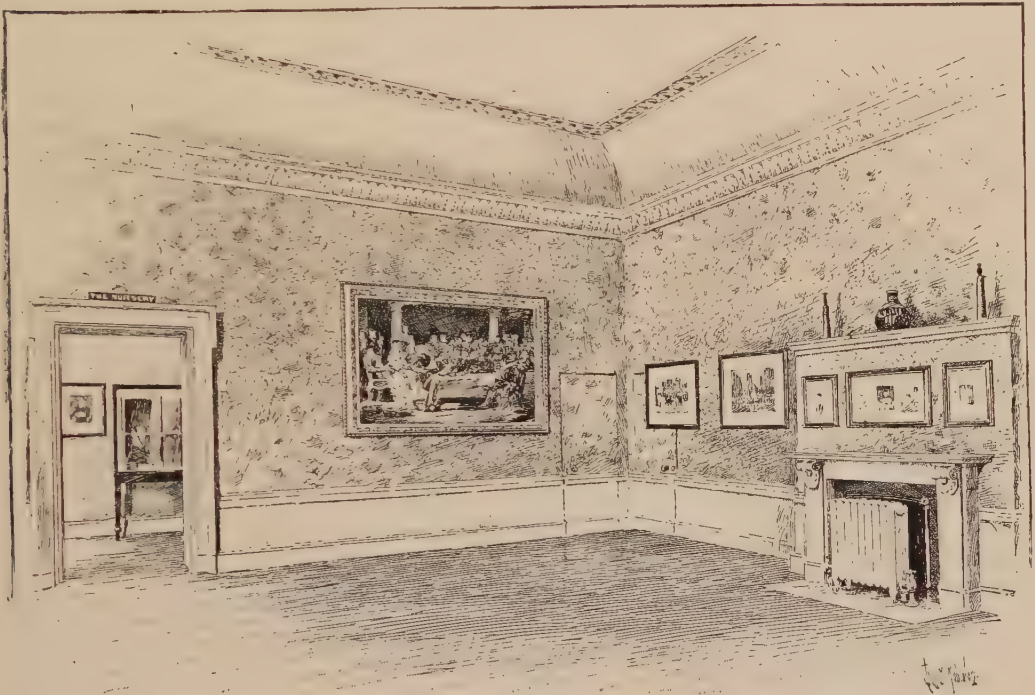


Photo: York & Son, Notting Hill, W.

THE PRINCESS VICTORIA'S NURSERY, KENSINGTON PALACE.

Queen, yet she was now the first of her generation, though with various possibilities against her.

The apartments occupied by the Duchess of Kent and the Princess Victoria were in the south-east portion of Kensington Palace, beneath the Kings' Gallery. They are now unused, but a visitor will find in one of the rooms on the principal floor a gilt plate over the mantelpiece with the inscription:—

IN THIS ROOM
QUEEN VICTORIA
WAS BORN,
May 24, 1819.

A room on the top floor served as the Princess's nursery, and in one corner still stands a doll's house, a headless horse, and the model of a ship, remnants of the toys which delighted her childhood.

The Duchess, after her husband's death, settled down with her children in Kensington Palace, where the Princess's youthful life was spent. The income of the family was, however, so small, and apparently the English Government so little friendly, that the mother of the future Queen was compelled to accept the aid which her brother Leopold, soon to be the elected King of the Belgians, could give her. But the character and demeanour of the Duchess must have speedily impressed the minds of those in power, for after a time her position was much ameliorated. In 1825 she was voted an allowance of £6,000 a year, and this was increased to £10,000 some years later; while in 1831 the singular compliment was paid her of appointing her Regent in case of her daughter's accession before her majority. There could be no better proof of the manner in which this unobtrusive yet dignified woman impressed all around her by her quiet self-restraint and devotion to her duty.

She was known, besides, to the country as fulfilling all the humble duties of a mother, nursing her infant and not afraid to show that her homely German training had made her familiar with all the duties of the nursery. And by degrees a great but generally silent respect grew up around her name. She did not seek, and perhaps in the many differences of national life might not have gained, the applause of the crowd, but her devotion of the life which had already known so many sorrows to the training and education of a child whose prospects were so overwhelming secured her a high place in popular esteem. A woman left alone to discharge such an office, and keeping her place and fulfilling her trust in quietness, without asking for any pleasure for herself, or complaining of any want of special attention, is always impressive to the popular imagination.

There is a story for which I cannot vouch—for it is hard to divine what possible business there could be between the Duke of Kent and an obstinate idealist full of all kinds of mysterious plans and theories—that the first man privileged to hold the little Princess in his arms was Robert Owen, the founder of that curious colony of New Lanark, in which the theory of co-operation between master and man was first put into practice. But the Duke was much connected with benevolent societies, and might have known Owen in this way. If it was true, it would be a memorable incident, like the appearance of the fairy in the children's books to bless (or perhaps to curse) the new-born Princess. If anything, it must have been a blessing the visionary left upon the little head, which was to think so much and so long in its day upon the condition of the people, and to preside over so many changes tending to their advantage.

There was, as we have said, no certainty of Princess Victoria's accession to

the throne at this period. It was still possible that her uncle of Clarence might have children. It was possible that her uncle the King might be released by the death of his wife and might marry again. There was, how-



THE DUCHESS OF KENT AND THE PRINCESS VICTORIA.

ever, sufficient probability of her succession to fill the minds of all belonging to her with a thrill of excitement, beyond that which greets every new-born child, when the little Princess came into the world. In the letter of her mother's mother, the old Duchess of Saxe-Coburg, written on hearing of the event, this sentiment is very apparent.

“Again a Charlotte,” she writes, “destined, perhaps, to play a great part one day if a brother is not born to take it out of her hands. The English like queens.” No happier augury could be said over the cradle of a sovereign, and nothing more true. The English have cause to like queens, for England has never been greater, more famous, or more full of genius than when her monarchs were women. And though George III., with his domestic virtues, had been a popular king, he was the only one of his race who had any pretensions to this title. The House of Hanover had not been beloved. It wanted a woman to conciliate and charm the heart of the nation, and to call forth that chivalry which is so good an auxiliary of loyalty. Princess Charlotte had already done something. She had made herself dear and sacred, if by nothing else, by her death. The country had mourned for her as for the child of its hopes. And now again, here was hope in its purest fortunate shape—re-born.

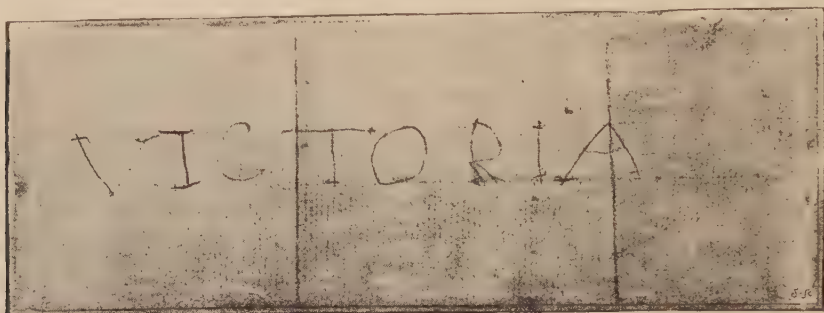
The Princess Victoria’s training, however, was very different from the irregular, unhappy education of her unfortunate cousin and predecessor. Except those splendid prospects, there was nothing happy in the external circumstances among which her life began. When she was only a few months old, as we have seen, her father died, closely followed by his father, poor old King George, whose life for some time past had been of little value to himself or anyone. Before this, it is recorded that “the Regent was not kind to his brother,” and when the Duke of Kent died it was found that “the poor Duke had left his family deprived of all means of existence.” Thus the position of the mother of the future Sovereign, a young German Princess so soon left alone in this strange and not very genial country, was far from consoling. Had she withdrawn with her child to her own country, to bring up the little Princess among her own people, cheaply and kindly in her old château, where she at least, if not her English baby, would have been at home, far away from the criticism and the extravagance, the late hours and bustle of English life, who could have wondered? But the Duchess had the temperate Coburg blood in her veins, and shared the sound sense and judgment of her race. She never forgot that her child was the first Princess of the blood-royal, English in all points, and imperatively requiring an English education. And she began her long career of self-denial by steadily remaining in England, though far from her friends and everything that was most dear.

The palace at Kensington thus became a home under something like the usual conditions. The little Heiress of England was not alone in her nursery, but, more happy than most children in her position, had the society of a sister, whose superior age must in those innocent days have neutralised the immense difference of importance, and given something of the sweet natural humility of a younger child in a well-regulated household to this centre of the family hopes, still all unconscious of her own greatness. This sister, Princess Feodore, afterwards Princess Hohenlohe, was the tenderest of

friends and companions to the Queen during her whole life, endeared by all the memories of early life which they spent together at Kensington and in the sweeter quietude of Claremont, the house in which Prince Leopold had spent his short married life, and in which his sister and her children found a second home. The Queen recalled the country delights which children of every rank enjoy so much, in the memorial which long years afterwards, in the depth of her own widowhood and sorrow, she devoted to her sister on her death. Those days at Claremont, her Majesty herself tells us, were "the happiest days of her childhood."

In this quiet routine, retired from all the observation and bustle of London, in that domestic peace which affords a certain compensation to such imperfect households for the loss, with the husband and father, of the noisier parts of life, the most careful education was given to the royal child. In no other kind of home are the children so entirely the centre of life as in that of a tender mother who is a widow. It does not require the superior importance of a future royalty to secure this concentration of all interests in one; but here there was every inducement, public and private, to make the mental and moral training of the little Princess the first object of all surrounding her. Over this training Prince Leopold watched with all the interest of a statesman and all the tenderness of a father. He introduced less disturbance than a father would have done, for all his own larger life was apart from the gentle household; but he was wiser than most fathers, and took the largest view of the trust thus confided to his hands; and all that the kindest and most watchful care could do he did for his sister and her precious charge. For already, too, other visions of the future were dawning before the far-seeing eyes of the man who—with the sincerest desire for the welfare of England, and a longing, no doubt made all the stronger by the melancholy failure of his personal hopes, to give to the country which had received him so kindly a noble Sovereign—had, at the same time, a natural wish to advance his own family, worthy by constitution and character as it had already proved itself. Another child, standing to him in exactly the same relationship as the little Victoria, had been born just after her in the ducal court at Saxe-Coburg, in the cheerful country house of the Rosenau, a child occupying the position to which he himself had been born, as the little Princess did that of his young wife so early lost. What wonder if the heart of the statesman Prince, still sore from that wound, pleased itself with the thought of another union which should carry out all his abortive hopes? While the children were still in their cradles this idea seems to have communicated itself to all about them. The family were in constant communication, the young mothers exchanging their pleasant experiences and bits of nursery news as mothers will do as long as the species shall last. All the doings and sayings of "the little May flower," as the Princess was called by her kind German kinsfolk, were recorded with

fond simplicity for the satisfaction of the old grandmother at home. The good German nurse, who passed from one house to another as her services were wanted, could not sufficiently describe "what a dear little love" the baby at Kensington was, and the baby at the Rosenau had the



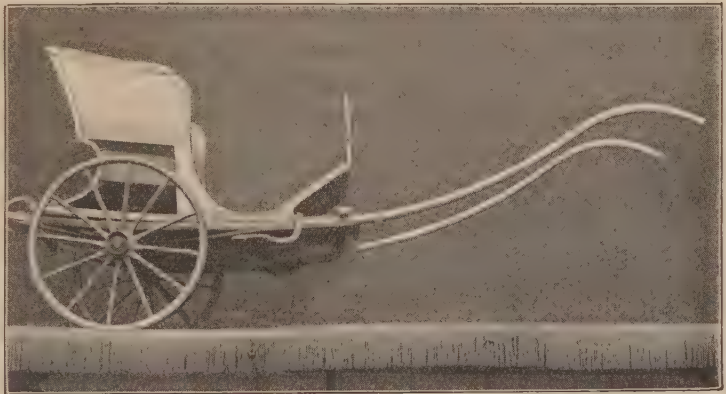
THE PRINCESS VICTORIA'S SIGNATURE AT THE AGE OF FOUR.

enthusiastic pen of his mother to do him full justice. • Albert was of extraordinary beauty, this impartial historian declared: he had "great blue eyes, dimples on each cheek, three teeth, and at eight months old was beginning to walk." Great news! enough to make the other nursery thrill with emulation as these notes were compared. What a compensation lies in this sweet babble of childhood—for women's hearts, at least! For both the poor ladies who wrote had troubles enough; the one in England had to hold her own with modest courage in face of the criticism and doubtful friendliness of a foreign society, in face of poverty and loneliness. The other was on the brink of a complete separation from home and children. A dark background full of human trouble and sorrow thus spread behind the two angelic heads that looked out wondering, with blue eyes wide open, upon the world. But nothing could be more charming and touching than this baby pair, destined to each other from their cradles, and with so much hope and so many plans already moving over their innocent heads.

There are a host of little anecdotes, many of them foolish and trivial, but some pretty and full of nature, concerning this early period. Perhaps some mother may be amused to hear not only that the Princess was successfully vaccinated but that she was the first of the royal family to undergo that salutary operation; or that the royal child was so much like other babies that, being taken up into his arms by a bishop, she seized hold of his wig, shaking forth clouds of powder, and had torn handfuls of hair out of it before the prelate could be released from her hands! A little later it was her delight to ride on a donkey which one of her uncles had given her, and on which she proceeded solemnly through Kensington Gardens, attended by her nurses, while the donkey was led by an old soldier who had been a servant of her father. This mode of progression so pleased her

that to persuade her to dismount and walk was almost impossible; but when the nurses failed the soldier guide occasionally succeeded. "It will do my Princess so much good to walk a little, and run on the nice grass," he whispered in her little ear, and the appeal was more effectual than all the prayers of the women. Another soldier saved her when a little cart, in which the same donkey was driven, happened to be overturned, and was much surprised to find himself thanked with tearful eloquence for his "brave conduct" in seizing the child before she fell. When she desired to know indignantly what was the use of learning the alphabet, which did not commend itself to her mind, and was told that unless she learnt her letters she could not read the books on the table—let us hope picture-books—she cried out in ready response, "I learn too, I learn too!" The public in later years was introduced to the Princess's dolls, or the survivors of them, of which there was an exhibition. Many of these were intended to represent historical personages, and some were dressed by the little lady's own hands. This fact represents a degree of happy leisure in the schoolroom which we fear would be impossible in our own much educated days. What with their lessons, and what with their games, the girls have no longer time for any such exercise; but how absorbing it once was, how delightful a piece of business! Queen Elizabeth and all her Court in brocade and velvet, with all the pearls carefully sewn on, and all the combinations of colour, giving so much thought. No doubt many a historical procession and scene was played with them, to the improvement of the Princess's his-

torical knowledge and to the delight of many a rainy afternoon. There were more than a hundred of them, their names and rank all written down in a book. In those days the use of the needle was a kind of religion, and even to a



CARRIAGE USED BY THE PRINCESS VICTORIA WHEN A CHILD.

(By permission of Messrs. Cole & Sons, High Street, Kensington.)

queen there was supposed to be pleasure and profit in it. It is a pity that such a gentle art should go out of favour.

Thus the Princess learned to sit still and amuse herself indoors—an excellent lesson which must have stood her in great stead in the after-experiences

of her laborious life, and which we fear is much neglected nowadays. Nor was the out-of-door portion neglected, though it did not take the violent form we now cultivate. The Queen's own amused recollection, when she first took travelling with her a little Princess Victoria, and saw herself once more bowing to the spectators in infant state from the window of the carriage, throws a pretty gleam of light back upon those early days. "It put me so in mind of myself when I was the little Princess," she says with the frank simplicity which make her Majesty's confidences to her people so popular. Her recollections are always so true, so unsophisticated, giving such absolute and simple reality to every scene.

Still, however, though an ever-growing interest accompanied her through all the later travels and home expeditions on which the wise mother conducted her child to make her acquainted with her future kingdom, her position was not even yet an assured one. There still existed in the background behind this little figure the shadow, always threatening to eclipse her, of another family in which children were being born, but not to life or hope. The Duchess of Clarence, afterwards Queen Adelaide, was a good woman, and though she must have felt deeply the extinction one after another of her own hopes, her demeanour to the little one who survived all those short-lived blossoms was perfect in motherly sweetness and affection. When she lost her last daughter she wrote to the Duchess of Kent in words of the most touching resignation. "My children are dead," said the poor lady, "but yours lives, and she is mine too!" So many griefs, so many dyings, went to make the throned estate and great fortune of the little Victoria. Her infantine face, all innocent and fearless, the same face which had come down from generation to generation through all the line of Brunswick, was the first young countenance for many years upon which there was no shade.

A few years later, when she was nine years old, Sir Walter Scott records in his diary that he had dined with the Duchess of Kent, and had been presented by Prince Leopold "to the little Princess Victoria—the Heir-Apparent to the House as things now stand. This little lady," he adds, "is educated with much care, and watched so closely that no busy maid has a moment to whisper 'You are the Heir of England.' I suspect, if we could dissect the little heart we should find that some pigeon or other bird of the air had carried the matter. She is fair, like the Royal Family." Sir Walter's idea, however, had as little foundation in fact as such surmises often have. The little Princess, neither at that time nor for years afterwards, knew anything of her pre-eminence. She was brought up with the strictest economy and regularity, as children of much lower position rarely are, and was taught at an early age to restrain her expenditure within the limits of her income, even when that income was but a child's pocket-money. Miss Martineau, an authority not likely to err in the way of enthusiasm, gives us, in her sketch of the Duchess of Kent, an anecdote current at the time

which illustrates the carefulness of the training better than it does the abstract statement which precedes it, that the Princess "was reared in as much honesty and care about money matters as any citizen's child." Very few citizens' children, we believe, ever were or could be so rigidly guarded from an extra shilling of expenditure. "It became known at Tunbridge



SOME OF THE PRINCESS VICTORIA'S DOLLS.

(By special permission of Her Majesty the Queen.)

Wells that the Princess had been unable to buy a box at the bazaar because she had spent her money. At this bazaar she had bought presents for almost all her relations, and had laid out her last shilling, when she remembered one cousin more, and saw a box priced half a crown which would suit him. The shop-people, of course, placed the box with the other purchases, but the little lady's governess admonished them by saying: 'No; you see the Princess has not got the money, therefore she cannot buy the box.' This being perceived, the next offer was to lay by the box till it could be

purchased; and the answer was, 'Oh, well, if you will be so good as to do that.' On quarter-day, before seven in the morning, the Princess appeared on her donkey to claim her purchase." This reads like a story out of "Sandford and Merton." But the Princess came on her father's side of a lavish and largely spending race; and no doubt on this account the discipline under which she was trained was the more severe.

Many little stories of a livelier character relieve the record of the conscientious training to which the Duchess, from her very earliest days, subjected her little girl. Childhood will out, however, on whatever level its little days are spent, and refuses to recognise the distinctions of society. The little Princess had the most delightful and most natural desire to play with every child that came in her way. Walking along the road, she came up to a child of her own age, a little village girl, with whom she made acquaintance by asking a trifling service of her. They walked on together in all the sudden confidence and familiarity of their age, till the Princess proposed to accompany her chance friend where she was going, and, giving her hand, said: "Let us run down the hill together"—an innocent Haroun al Raschid making her little researches into the life of the people. The visit, we regret to say, was stopped by the watchful governess behind. Another of a similar character is still prettier, and affords a charming picture. The little Princess was so fond of music that the Duchess, to give her pleasure, sent for an infant prodigy of the time, a child called Lyra, about five years old, whose performances on the harp held her audiences breathless.

"While this young musician was playing, the Duchess, perceiving how deeply the Princess's attention was engrossed by the music, left the room for a few minutes. On her return she found the harp deserted. The companionless Heiress of England had beguiled the youthful musician from her instrument by the display of some of her toys, and the two children were seated side by side on the hearthrug, in a state of high enjoyment, surrounded by the Princess's playthings, from which she was making a selection for the little Lyra."

Thus Nature triumphed over education and art and every fine thing—as what would become of us if it did not at five years old?

These pretty stories are endless. Someone tells how, spending a day with Queen Adelaide, the little lady was asked to choose what would be the greatest "treat" she could desire for her day's enjoyment, and, eagerly responding, begged to be allowed to *clean the windows* as the very acme of enjoyment! We confess that we scarcely believe in the superlative virtue which made her choose "a piece of stale bread" as the only refreshment she desired on a journey; for we are certain that the Duchess was too wise to spoil her digestion with too many cakes, and the Princess was too natural to choose such unattractive fare. The tendency, of course, of all these tales is to make her out much "too wise and good for human



THE PRINCESS VICTORIA AND SIR WALTER SCOTT (*see p. 14*).

nature's daily food"; but, fortunately, the Princess herself always demolished this theory when possible by conducting herself not as a model child, but an exceedingly natural one, full of spirits and life. On another occasion, seeing a crowd collected round the door of a house to which her mother had taken her to pay a visit, the little *espiègle*, with some complacent attendant, stole out by a side door, and, standing in the crowd, listened to its remarks on the royal equipage and on herself with the greatest delight. But this must certainly have been at a more advanced age. She was a brave little person, not given to crying or complaints. On one occasion she had been warned not to play with a dog which was of uncertain temper, but continued to do so until the animal betrayed himself by a sudden snap. "Oh, thank you," she said; "he didn't bite me; he only warned me," with admirable justice and equanimity.

There was also a vein of natural diplomacy, the instinct of a Court, in the little Princess, notwithstanding her simple breeding.

When taken to see her "Uncle King," and being asked to choose what music the band should play, she asked for "God Save the King" with delightful if precocious tact. Another time the King asked the Princess which she had most enjoyed of the amusements at Windsor. "The drive I took with you, Uncle King," replied the little courtier. A prettier instance of this infallible instinct of good manners, which is of much importance in a Court, where the neglect of a salutation may work the direst woe, is in another incident. "At a children's ball given by the Duke of Gloucester, little Princess Victoria, running after her uncle the Duke of Sussex as he was leaving the room, cried, 'Won't you give me a kiss before you go?' When the Duke stooped to do so, the Princess hurriedly whispered in his ear, 'You have forgotten to say good-night to mamma.'" The child had evidently become aware of those perpetual reminders by which the great ones of the earth are kept to their "p's and q's" by anxious officials, and prevented from neglecting anyone; but the instinct was guided by affection in this case, and is charming to hear of.

The records of Princess Victoria's education have an air of abstract perfection which is less attractive to the mind, though broken always by childish outbursts and little rebellions of Nature. These accounts of a system of hours and succession of studies, appalling to the ordinary mind, and apparently more fitted to crush all individuality than to develop it, are happily interrupted by many a little *espièglerie* with excellent effect, though deeply alarming to the scholastic mind. The music lesson had been very bad one day, and the professor had been driven out of all the complacencies of the Court, and provoked so far as to remind his pupil that there was no royal road by which she could make herself mistress of music. The governess concurred in the maxim and in the reproof; and

the Princess was naughty—as naughty, provoking, and insubordinate as could be conceived. When these words met her ears, she jumped up, closed and locked the piano, and ran off holding up the key. “You see,” she cried, “there is a royal road by which I can make myself mistress of the piano.” On this occasion, or some other, the Duchess came in in the middle of the lesson to ask how things were going on. The governess replied in a significant tone, “Once the Princess was rather troublesome.”



PIANO UPON WHICH THE PRINCESS VICTORIA WAS TAUGHT TO PLAY.

(By permission of Messrs. Erard.)

The Princess caught her instructress by the sleeve. “No,” she said demurely, “*twice*. Don’t you remember?”

The arrival of this governess, a German lady of sufficient condition to occupy such a position, who remained with her pupil for the rest of her life, gives an opportunity for a very pleasant glimpse of the household and its arrangements.

“It was about six o’clock when I reached the house of the German chaplain in London. I was informed that the Duchess of Kent was much pleased at the news of my arrival, and regretted that, owing to the public having already been informed, she was going to the theatre. At nine o’clock we drove to Kensington Palace. I was instructed not to use the form ‘Your Highness,’ but to say simply ‘Princess.’ The lady-in-waiting received me pleasantly, and the Princess in a pretty, childlike way, and they immediately refreshed me with tea.

“My little Princess will be twelve years old to-morrow. She is not tall, but very pretty; has dark brown hair, beautiful brown eyes,* and a mouth which, though not tiny, is very

* An evident mistake, for the Queen’s eyes are blue.

good tempered and pleasant; very fine teeth, a small but graceful figure, and a very small foot. She was dressed in white muslin with a coral necklet. Her whole bearing is so childish and engaging that one could not desire a more amiable child.

"At ten o'clock the lady-in-waiting conducted us to our apartments. They consist of four rooms: the anteroom, the living room, the bed-chamber, the hanging-closet. I sleep



THE PRINCESS VICTORIA'S WRITING AT NINE YEARS OF AGE.

with the Princess in one of the rooms which contains two beautiful large upholstered beds, resembling small houses. One maid waits on us both.

"The furniture in the rooms is mahogany, with gilding; the sofas and beds are covered with pretty chintz, the floor with pretty carpets.

"I had been informed that the whole circle breakfasted at 8.30, but that the Duchess of Kent desired me to rest myself on the following morning, and to breakfast alone. Notwithstanding this, I rose early enough, and about breakfast time the Duchess sent to say that she was impatient to see me. She was standing at the breakfast table, and is a woman between thirty and forty, rather short, with brown hair and brown eyes. Without being beautiful, she has an expression of extreme goodness. She said something about being obliged by my

rapid journey, to which I replied that I had but consulted my own interests by so coming. She then gave me her hand, which I kissed, receiving in return a kiss upon my cheek.

"At breakfast we seated ourselves at a round table. Soon afterwards the Duke of Sussex arrived. The Duke speaks German with me, but the Duchess speaks French. The latter wishes me to converse in French with the Princess, because my pronunciation pleases her; and really, for the most part, although I am associated with royalty, I cannot call the treatment I receive other than friendly.

"At one o'clock luncheon is served; at six we dine. The company at table consists of



THE PRINCESS VICTORIA AT ELEVEN YEARS OF AGE.
(From the picture by R. Westall, R.A., in the Royal Collection.)

the Duke of Sussex, the Duchess, the lady-in-waiting, the Princess, the domestic physician, and myself.

"The Duchess sings, draws, and plays well. She is a most affectionate mother. I have requested permission to give the Princess lessons in French and Italian myself; in other subjects the Court chaplain, painter, and musician will instruct her. As we did not go to church on Sunday morning, the Duchess read a sermon aloud, and commented on it pleasantly to her little daughter. The little Princess is a charming child, and resembles the Princess Charlotte, so they say. After dinner we remain together till nine o'clock, when, tea being over, I retire with my Princess, who goes to bed and I can then amuse myself.

"This morning the Duchess spoke to me about her daughter again, and gave me permission to use the more familiar 'Thou.' [Referring to the practice in German, unknown to the English, by which members of the same family, and very intimate friends, use the second person singular in speaking to each other.] This I declined, giving my reasons, of which she kindly approved.

"The Princess has very many talents, and much goodness of disposition; plays very prettily and has a pleasant voice. So far as my wardrobe is concerned, I can use everything, and my clothes even meet with approval; my black hat even—for my little Princess is wearing just such an one.

"The Duchess is unspeakably kind towards me; sometimes she is too polite, and then I do not rest until she has become less so.

"She wished, for example, that when she and the Princess drove out I should sit by her side, and the Princess at the back. Several times I could not prevent, but at last she has given in and says on such occasions, with a laugh, to her daughter, 'Sit by me this time, since Fräulein Lehzen wishes it so.' But I do not hesitate to remark to the little one, whom I am most anxious not to spoil, that this consideration is not on her account, because she is still a child, but that my respect for her mother disposes me to decline the seat."

Before the arrival of this lady, the Princess had scarcely left her mother's side, occupying a bed in the Duchess's room, taking her simple meals by the Duchess's side at a small table which held her bread and milk and other simple viands, receiving her first lessons from her mother, and always under her close supervision. The advent of the Baroness Lehzen thus made the first change in the order of the child's days, and there is now a little more maturity of mind in her little sayings. Here are some pretty pieces of childish wit not unworthy of record.

"On one occasion the little Princess was reading aloud how Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, introduced her sons to the first of Roman ladies with the words, 'These are my jewels!' when she paused in her lesson to raise her eyes from the book and remark, 'She should have said "*my Cornelians!*"' [These were favourite ornaments at the time, and no doubt the little Princess possessed some.]

"The Queen's tutor, Bishop Davys, had a quiet humour, and enjoyed his clever pupil's repartees. He had been preaching from his favourite text, 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.'

"The Princess asked, 'Do not men reap anything but what they sow?' 'Yes,' replied he, 'if they allow someone to come and sow tares amongst their wheat.' 'Ah! I know who that someone is,' said the Princess, 'and must keep him at arm's length.' 'At arm's length only, Ma'am?' rejoined the tutor. 'Well, if I keep him there he won't do much harm, was the quick reply."

The same authority informs us that the Princess had a great faculty for languages, and acquired both French and German readily and easily, but sometimes objected to speak them when in a perverse mood.

"I am an English girl, and I shall speak nothing but English," she would say.

We conclude this story of the Princess's childhood with the prettiest story of all, the manner in which she was made aware of her future prospects. No one had been allowed to breathe a word of these in her ear. But events began to happen which made everything more clear. George IV.

died, which brought her a step nearer to the throne; and it was no longer likely that King William would have heirs to succeed him of his own. Thus the child of Kensington Palace became, beyond all doubt, next in succession, with only an old man of sixty-five, in indifferent health, between her and the throne. She herself was only twelve, and the next person in succession, the Duke of Cumberland, did not possess the confidence of the nation. In these circumstances, as has been already mentioned, a Bill was brought into Parliament to make the Duchess of Kent Regent in case her daughter should be called upon to ascend the throne before she came of age—a very unusual compliment to a foreign princess. When these public precautions were taken it was thought necessary to inform the little girl herself of her true position, that she was not merely one of a band of princes and princesses, the younger members of the family, but the first among them, the future Head of the House. She was in the midst of her daily lessons, somewhat surprised, it would seem, at the grave work required from her, which was not expected from the other princesses, when this great intimation was made to her. The story is told in a letter from her governess, Baroness Lehzen, to the Queen, written in 1854, as a means, apparently of preserving these records of early youth.

“I ask your Majesty’s leave to cite some remarkable records of your Majesty when only twelve years old, while the Regency Bill was in progress. I then said to the Duchess of Kent that now, for the first time, your Majesty ought to know your place in the Succession. Her Royal Highness agreed with me, and I put the genealogical table into the historical book. When Mr. Davys [the Queen’s instructor, afterwards Bishop of Peterborough] was gone, the Princess Victoria opened the book again as usual, and, seeing the additional paper, said, ‘I never saw that before.’ ‘It was not thought necessary you should, Princess,’ I answered. ‘I see I am nearer the throne than I thought.’ ‘So it is, Ma’am,’ I said. After some moments the Princess resumed, ‘Now, many a child would boast, but they don’t know the difficulty. There is much splendour, but there is much responsibility.’ The Princess, having lifted up the forefinger of her right hand while she spoke, gave me that little hand, saying, ‘I will be good. I understand now why you urged me so much to learn even Latin. My cousins Augusta and Mary never did; but you told me Latin is the foundation of English grammar and of all the elegant expressions, and I learned it as you wished it. But I understand all better now,’ and the little Princess gave me her hand, repeating, ‘I will be good.’”

It is seldom that a scene like this stands out so distinctly in the early story of a life destined to greatness. The hush of awe upon the child; the childish application of this great secret to the abstruse study of Latin, which was not required from the others; the immediate resolution, so simple, yet containing all the wisest sage could have counselled or the greatest hero vowed, “I will be good,” make a perfect picture. It is the clearest appearance of the future Queen in her own person that we get through the soft obscurity of those childish years. The same hand which placed itself so solemnly in the anxious guardian’s hand to give weight to the simple

vow, inscribed long afterwards, in full maturity, a few words of recollection upon the margin of this narrative. "I cried much on hearing it," writes the Queen. No further words are needed to enhance the effect of the touching scene.

After this wonderful revelation the schoolroom routine began again, the lessons were learned, the happy monotony of the child's existence was resumed. All was as modest, as retired, as quiet as ever. But it was not easy to pursue this salutary work, or to satisfy the jealous observers who noted everything that went on, and kept a constant watch upon the movements of the young heiress and her mother. Difficulties of all kinds beset the path of the Duchess of Kent, and discouraged but did not overcome her in the quiet determination with which she pursued her child's best interests.

The revelations of the late Mr. Greville, questionable as they are both in good taste and social faithfulness, show painfully enough some of these difficulties. The King took dire offence at the wise restraint under which the young Princess was growing up, and so far forgot what was due to a lady, and his guest, as to upbraid the Duchess at his own table for the seclusion in which she kept her child. When we read of this scene, the Queen's confusion, the little Princess's tears, and the family squabble exposed to all the gossiping, whispering world, we can better realise what the mother of the future Queen had to endure and how courageously she held her ground. It is said to have been in consequence of this scene that the Princess was not at her uncle's coronation, which perhaps was going a little too far on the Duchess's side; but she was only human like the rest of us.

Evidently to this conscientious mother and guardian the charge of conducting her young daughter safe and spotless through all these dizzy paths to the great elevation which awaited her was motive enough to enable her to bear all things, and follow steadily the course chalked out, whatever angry King or impertinent critic could say. She was, we can scarcely doubt, too severe, since the Queen speaks long afterwards of her "sad childhood"; but in a path so full of difficulty it was perhaps the only safe way.

On the other hand, while the Duchess was blamed for keeping the young Princess out of the buzz of the Court, she was equally blamed for the little expeditions, so profitable to all parties, by which the young lady was made acquainted with her country and became to some degree known, so far as the modesty of her girlhood permitted, to her future people. Almost every heir or heiress who is not the son or daughter of the previous possessor of the inheritance is liable to the same jealous watch and inevitable fault-finding. The mother kept her child from all vulgar contact with the crowd; it was a "rigorous seclusion." She took her to

see a beautiful cathedral or a historical house: it was an attempt at a royal progress. Thus it was that the critics contradicted each other. And in the meantime Kensington Palace held its own with a firmness not less remarkable than the purity and gravity of the aims which were there pursued. The discipline naturally relaxed a little as the years went on, and the Princess was gradually introduced into society; but still with all the care and watchful supervision which had surrounded her as a child.

Thus she grew up, and advanced towards womanhood in an atmosphere as nearly resembling the wholesome quiet in which childhood is ordinarily allowed to develop as was possible, and amid those natural relationships which make life sweet, and give so many delightful and sustaining memories to youth. No one has more warmly acknowledged the power of these early associations than the Queen. Her heart has been faithful to all the companions of her early days—her sister, who was her closest friend and counsellor through life, her good governess, who “never took a holiday,” as the Queen says, nor had a thought beyond the welfare of her pupil. Of those who surrounded her in those early days she forgot none, not even the crossing-sweeper near the gates of Kensington Palace, who received a pension when the little Princess became a great Queen.



Photo: York & Son.

THE PRINCESS VICTORIA'S DOLL'S HOUSE.
(At Kensington Palace.)

CHAPTER II.

THE ACCESSION: AND THE ROMANCE OF YOUTH.

EVERYBODY knows the famous historic scene which suddenly burst upon this background of perfect quiet, illuminating every corner. The Princess had attained that early majority, eighteen years of age, which is conceded to royal persons, and was now legally capable of ascending the throne. Her uncle, King William, after an illness of some duration, died on the 20th of June, 1837, at half past two in the morning, at Windsor Castle, in the presence of a number of the great functionaries of State. It might have been imagined that such a sad piece of news could have been kept till the morning, but etiquette enjoined its immediate communication to the heir. The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chamberlain left Windsor at once, and, hurrying through the summer night at the best speed of post horses—the distance is a little over twenty miles, but there was then no railway—arrived at Kensington Palace before anyone was astir. They were even kept waiting “thumping” at the gates, though they came to bear a Crown, before anyone heard or opened to them. Even when admitted, they had difficulty in performing their mission: they were hastily introduced into a small sitting-room, and left there while the startled servants, half awake, went in search of the Princess’s maid, probably a personage more alarming to disturb than the mistress of the house. She was roused, however, at last, and came mincing to the impatient gentlemen below, to say that Her Royal Highness was in “so sweet a sleep” that she had not the heart to wake her. The maid was sent off overawed in haste with the astounding message that the visitors had come to wait upon *the Queen* on business of State. And shortly afterwards there came hurriedly into the room the little figure, half dressed, in a white dressing-gown and slippers, her pretty hair falling on her shoulders, her eyes but hardly awakened, in the dewy brightness of wonder and emotion; no more than a little girl: who yet, an hour or two ago, had already become one of the greatest monarchs in the world!

The scene has been described a hundred times, but its interest never flags; the contrast, the incongruity, the startling nature of that strange *réveil*, which is more romantic than romance, never fails to touch the

imagination; and no doubt when it is farther off across the levels of history, it will form a dazzling point in the narrative of the next Macaulay who arises to commemorate the centuries past. It was the first great emergency which had ever occurred in the life of the carefully trained and closely guarded Princess, and she had to meet it unaided. No doubt the event had of late been much talked of by her intimate counsellors, and she had heard of it, and of the approaching change in her life, and the first step which it would be necessary for her to take alone. Severely alone that first step was now taken; we do not hear even of a shadow of the mother at the door or other intruder to disturb the solemnity of this first meeting between the girlish Majesty of England and her first officers of State. But the Princess, we are told, notwithstanding her imperfect attire and sudden rousing, was quite self-possessed. Timidity and shyness would have been out of place at such a solemn moment. She was overawed and serious, thus suddenly brought face to face with the immense responsibilities of the change to which she was born. We are told that when she left these splendid messengers, themselves full of excitement and emotion, she hurried to her mother, and, throwing herself into the arms of the Duchess, wept to her heart's content—then begged that for the first time in her life she might be left for an hour or two quite alone, to think over this mysterious and tremendous event. It was the first signal of a change as great for the mother as the child. She had never known what it was to be alone before. But now at one step she had come into the isolation as well as the power of royalty.

We are not told how these long bright hours of the summer morning passed from five o'clock till eleven in the forenoon, when the new Queen, with so little apprenticeship to her glories, was to meet the Privy Council, which included everything that was greatest in England: the statesmen, the high officials, the most exalted clergy, the most noted and most renowned men of their time, and along with them the uncles who had protected and petted her childhood, now the subjects, extraordinary to think of, of the little Victoria whom they had caressed and played with. One thing she did, we are told, was to write to Queen Adelaide, the new-made widow, who had always been so kind to her. One of those remembrancers who are always at the ear of royalty, dazzled perhaps by the new glories, and pleased to recall them at every moment, whispered, "Not the Queen of Eng'land, the Queen Dowager," as the young writer addressed her letter; the new Majesty turned impatiently from the suggestion. "I know that," she said, "but I shall not be the first to remind her of it." A very noble and admirable, and also most natural and becoming speech.

Was it on this very first morning that, instead of being summoned to breakfast by her mother, the young Queen sent formally to invite the Duchess of Kent's presence? We know not, and hope not; but, at all events, it was a formality almost immediately adopted. At eleven the Privy Council assembled.

Mr. Greville, so excellent an authority and one who cannot be accused of partiality, gives us an eye-witness's account of the proceedings.

"The King died at twenty minutes after two yesterday morning, and the young Queen met the Council at Kensington Palace at eleven. Never was there anything like the first impression she produced, or the chorus of praise and admiration which is raised about her manner and behaviour, and certainly not without justice. It was very extraordinary, and certainly something far beyond what was looked for. Her youth and inexperience, and the ignorance of the world concerning her, naturally excited intense curiosity to see how she would act on this trying occasion, and there was a considerable assemblage at the Palace, notwithstanding the short notice that was given. The first thing to be done was to teach her her lesson, which for this purpose Melbourne had himself to learn. I gave him the Council papers, and explained all that was to be done, and he went and explained all this to her. He asked, too, if she would enter the room accompanied by the great officers of State, but she said she would come in alone. When the Lords were assembled, the Lord President informed them of the King's death, and suggested, as they were so numerous, that a few of them should repair to the presence of the Queen and inform her of the event, and that their lordships were assembled in consequence; and, accordingly, the two royal dukes, the two Archbishops, the Chancellor, and Melbourne went with him. The Queen received them in the adjoining room alone. As soon as they had returned the proclamation was read and the usual order passed, when the doors were thrown open, and the Queen entered, accompanied by her two uncles, who advanced to meet her. She bowed to the Lords, took her seat, and then read her Speech in a clear, distinct, and audible voice, and without any appearance of fear or embarrassment. She was quite plainly dressed, and in mourning.

"After she had read her Speech, and taken and signed the oath for the security of the Church of Scotland, the Privy Councillors were sworn, the two royal dukes first, by themselves; and as these two old men, her uncles, knelt before her, swearing allegiance and kissing her hand, I saw her blush up to the eyes, as if she felt the contrast between their civil and their natural relations, and this was the only sign of emotion which she evinced. Her manner to them was very graceful and engaging. She kissed them both, rose from her chair, and moved towards the Duke of Sussex, who was farthest from her, and too infirm to reach her. She seemed rather bewildered at the multitude of men who were sworn, and who came one after another to kiss her hand, but she did not speak to anybody, nor did she make the slightest difference in her manner, or show any in her countenance to any individual of any rank, station, or party. She went through the whole ceremony, occasionally looking at Melbourne for instruction when she had any doubt what to do, which hardly ever occurred, and with perfect calmness and self-possession, but at the same time with a graceful modesty and propriety particularly interesting and ingratiating. When the business was done, she retired as she entered."

Alone! She who had never moved a step without companionship or attendance in all her previous life. It is not wonderful, after this remarkable scene was over, that the statesmen should cluster together in a murmur of conversation, talking over this strange and solitary young creature who had suddenly appeared among them, aware of her high dignity, and bearing the weight of it with such a childish grace. Their well-seasoned souls were soft over the girl who fulfilled so lofty an ideal without a moment's loss of her natural and unaffected sweetness and youth. The same authority continues:—

"Peel told me how amazed he was at her manner and behaviour, at her apparent deep sense of her situation, and at her firmness; she appeared, in fact, to be awed but not daunted. And afterwards the Duke of Wellington told me the same thing, and added that if she had been his own daughter he could not have desired to see her



"“AS THESE TWO OLD MEN, HER UNCLAS, KNELT BEFORE HER.”” (p. 28).

perform her part better. It was settled that she was to hold a Council at St. James's this day, and be proclaimed there to-morrow at ten o'clock, and she expressed a wish to see Lord Albemarle, who went to her and told her he was come to take his orders. She said, 'I have no orders to give: you know all this so much better than I do. I am to be at St. James's this day, and must beg you to find me a conveyance proper for the occasion.' Accordingly he went and fetched her in state, with a great escort. I

rode down the Park, and saw her appear at the window when she was proclaimed. The Duchess of Kent was there, but not prominent. The Queen was surrounded by her Ministers, and curtsied repeatedly to the people. At twelve she held a Council, at which she presided with as much ease as if she had been doing nothing else all her life; and though Lord Lansdowne and my colleague had contrived between them to make some confusion with the Council papers, she was not put out by it. She looked very well, and although so small in stature and without much pretension to beauty, the gracefulness of her manner and the good expression of her countenance gave her, on the whole, a very agreeable appearance, and with her youth inspire an excessive interest in all who approach her, which I can't help feeling myself.

"Conyngham, when he came to her with the intelligence of the King's death, brought a request from the Queen-Dowager that she might be permitted to remain at Windsor till after the funeral, and she has written her a letter couched in the kindest terms, begging her to consult nothing but her own health and convenience, and to remain at Windsor just as long as she pleases. In short, she appears to act with every kind of good taste and good feeling, as well as good sense; and, as far as it has gone, nothing can be more favourable than the impression she has made."

Higher testimony than this could scarcely be. We find another description from outside of the latter ceremony—the Presentation at St. James's—from a very different kind of witness. It is written by Miss Martineau in her "Autobiography," and gives a different aspect of the scene. The reader will be amused to note the difference between the respectful enthusiasm of the first narrator, who saw and heard at first hand, and was in communication with all those who had the best opportunities of judging, and the patronising approval of the lady who had no more than a bystander's knowledge of the external aspect of affairs:—

"In the course of the morning," she says, "a friend came to invite my old ladies to go with him to a place near, where they could at their ease see the Queen presented to the people. They went into the Park, and stood in front of the window of St. James's Palace where, among other places, the Sovereigns are proclaimed and presented. Scarcely half a dozen people were there, for very few were aware of the custom. There stood the young creature in the simplest mourning, with her sleek bands of brown hair as plain as her dress. The tears ran fast down her cheeks as Lord Melbourne stood by her side, and she was presented to the half-dozen lookers-on as their sovereign."

Even this less dignified description, however, though not intended to convey any very favourable impression, is full of interest, and shows the universal touch of emotion in the minds of all, small and great, towards the slight girl of eighteen, looking out royally, if somewhat wistfully, upon the world of which she was mistress, in all the freshness and glory of that midsummer day. The old ladies were not so much impressed by her dignity and calm as the statesmen were, and probably conjectured the tears and felt themselves able to divine the fluttering of the heart in so young a bosom. The same witness describes the young Majesty as being "really pretty in the upper part of her face, and with an ingenuous and sincere air which seemed full of promise," the same thoughtful and candid, open-eyed, and straightforward look which makes the portraits taken at this

period so remarkable. There is a picture in the corridor at Windsor Castle, not of any great excellence in point of art (though it is from the hand of Wilkie) but affecting and interesting from the higher human charm which gives these pageants a quite new and peculiar attraction. It is called "The Queen's First Council," and shows us the girl-Queen, so young and slight and childlike in appearance, seated with a grave simplicity among the



THE PRINCESS VICTORIA IN 1837.

(From the Drawing by R. J. Lane.)

veterans of the State. It would be difficult to imagine anything more touching.

This picture, it is said, distressed the Queen much, as the artist represented her as dressed in white instead of the mourning which she wore for her uncle; and we think her Majesty's feeling was right. It is the function of Art to get over difficulties, and the black, being true, would have been still more impressive and affecting.

The coronation took place on the 28th of June, 1838. It is difficult to choose from the many descriptions of that ceremony; we may therefore continue the account of Miss Martineau, which is not deficient in appreciation of the scene, if a little less effusive than most in the sentiment of the

occasion. "The sight of the rapid filling of the Abbey was enough to go for," she says.

"The stone architecture contrasted finely with the gay colour of the multitude. From my high seat I commanded the whole north transept, the area with the throne, and many portions of galleries, and the balconies, which were called the vaultings. Except a mere sprinkling of oddities, everybody was in full dress. The scarlet of the military officers mixed in well, and the groups of the clergy were dignified; but to our unaccustomed eye the prevalence of Court dress had a curious effect. The Earl Marshal's assistants, called 'Gold Sticks,' looked very well from above, lightly flitting about in white breeches, silk stockings, blue laced frocks, and white sashes. The throne, covered, as was its footstool, with cloth of gold, stood on an elevation of four steps in the centre of the area. The first peeress took her seat in the north transept, opposite, at a quarter to seven, and three of the bishops came next. From that time the peers and their ladies arrived faster and faster. Each peeress was conducted by two Gold Sticks, one of whom handed her to her seat, and the other bore and arranged her train on her lap, and saw that her coronet, footstool, and book were comfortably placed. About nine the first gleams of the sun started into the Abbey, and presently travelled down to the peeresses. I had never before seen the full effect of diamonds. As the light travelled, each lady shone out as a rainbow. The brightness, vastness, and dreamy magnificence of the scene produced a strange effect of exhaustion and sleepiness. The guns told when the Queen set forth, and there was unusual animation. The Gold Sticks flitted about; there was tuning in the orchestra; and the foreign ambassadors and their suites arrived in quick succession. Prince Esterhazy, crossing a bar of sunshine, was the most prodigious rainbow of all. He was covered with diamonds and pearls; and as he dangled his hat it cast a dazzling radiance all round. At half-past eleven the guns told that the Queen had arrived; but as there was much to be done in the robing-room, there was a long pause before she appeared. A burst from the orchestra marked her appearance at the doors, and the anthem, 'I was Glad,' rang through the Abbey. Everybody rose. The 'God save the Queen' of the organ swelled gloriously forth after the recognition. The acclamation when the crown was put on her head was very animated; and in the midst of it, in an instant of time, the peeresses were all coronetted. The homage was as pretty a sight as any—trains of peers touching her crown and then kissing her hand."

The glimmer of magnificence in this picture has been enlarged upon by many hands, but there is one striking detail, the simultaneous self-coronetting of the peeresses as the Queen's crown was put on—that seems new to us, and a picturesque incident in the pageant. The Queen herself looked "small," though regal in the cloth of gold mantle, the centre of that glittering crowd.

While all these pageants were going on, however, and everything flashing into splendour, turning to gold at the touch of her small hand, there were some less happy alterations in the life of the young Sovereign. One regrettable change, required it is to be supposed by etiquette, was her partial separation from the mother who had guarded her so closely. Etiquette, it is to be supposed, required this, and yet it must, one would think, have been caused by something more than etiquette. The appearance of the Duchess of Kent, dimly seen in the background when her Majesty was first presented to public gaze as the Queen, was symbolical of her future position. She who had been all in all, and who, had King William's death occurred a year earlier, would have been Regent of the kingdom, was now at a stroke



THE QUEEN RECEIVING THE SACRAMENT AT HER CORONATION.
(From the picture by C. R. Leslie, R.A., in the Royal Collection.)

nothing in it, put back from the current of affairs, an attendant rather than the principal companion and counsellor of the Queen. The Duchess, however, made no complaint, so far as the world was aware, and continued her life of abnegation in the house no longer hers but her daughter's, suddenly effaced as by the sweep of a brush from the foreground of life.

The congratulations of a circle farther off, yet in affection and anxiety

very near, bring before us a number of distinguished spectators in the background, whom this great event affected very deeply. Not the least of these was the excellent, wise, and philosophical observer, Baron Stockmar, a man who had risen from a humble position to be the chief adviser and schoolmaster, almost dictator, of the Coburg-Gotha house, and to whom all its branches, royal and otherwise, wrote and reported themselves with the most curious humility, as if feeling themselves always within the reach of his pedagogic cane, yet with an affection and confidence which is still more remarkable. Queen Victoria can have come but little under the influence of this remarkable family authority in her earlier years, yet she too turned to him in all the most important moments of her life with the same mingling of awe and

Victoria

Right Reverend Father in God.

We greet you well
Whereas the Twenty eighth day of June
next is appointed for the Solemnity of
Our Royal Coronation;

These are to Will and Command
you (all excuses set apart) to make
your personal attendance on Us at the time
above-mentioned, furnished and appointed as
to your Rank and Quality appertaining
there to do and perform all such Services
as shall be required and belong unto you
Whereof you are not to fail. And so
We bid you most heartily farewell

Given at Our Court at St James's
the ninth day of May 1838
in the first year of Our Reign

By Her Majesty's Command

L. Samuel

Lord Bishop of Exeter

Norfolk & M

A SUMMONS TO THE QUEEN'S CORONATION, COUNTERSIGNED
BY HER MAJESTY.

familiarity, to which Stockmar replied constantly with the best of advice, taking the high position allotted to him with infinite, almost whimsical, simplicity as his natural right. He was the *alter ego* of his royal master and friend, King Leopold of Belgium, the young Queen's uncle, who also in every way with the most solicitous affection, if scarcely so calmly authoritative as Stockmar, watched over every step his niece took, always ready to counsel

and direct her. From this wise uncle to the young cousin, the baby contemporary, Albert—who has been mentioned in their infant days, and who, just setting out on the travels which were intended to complete his education, had heard of her elevation with a beating heart—all the friendly princely circle breathed exhortations to duty and conscientious endeavour in the young Queen's ear. "Now you are the Queen of the mightiest land in Europe; in your hand lies the happiness of millions," said young Prince Albert in his letter of congratulation. "May heaven assist you and strengthen you for that high and difficult task!" Under no light aspect was the young Queen permitted to contemplate her new position, and no doubt this profound sense of the gravity of a great office produced "the astonishing self-possession" at which her anxious kinsfolk themselves wondered, and which the English statesmen regarded with such a unanimous impulse of honest admiration.

Of the short interval which followed, of the young Queen's reign alone, there is little record. She herself speaks of it with expressions of regret not at all unusual in one who has lived an exceptionally pure and virtuous life, in which a little youthful levity, looked at over the fair landscape of well-spent years, looks almost like a crime. The brighter that landscape is the more profound looks the innocent shadow of the morning cloud. "The sudden change from the secluded life of Kensington to the independence of her position as Queen-regnant at the age of eighteen" might well have been an excuse for many mistakes. It is uncourtly, it is even almost unkind, to speak of the errors of that early moment, so soon amended and in themselves so trivial. Yet we venture to think that the Queen, in her expressions of penitence, was not without some warrant for the regret she expresses. That certainly was the time in her life for which excuse was necessary if there ever was such a time, and she would be more than human if she were altogether without fault.

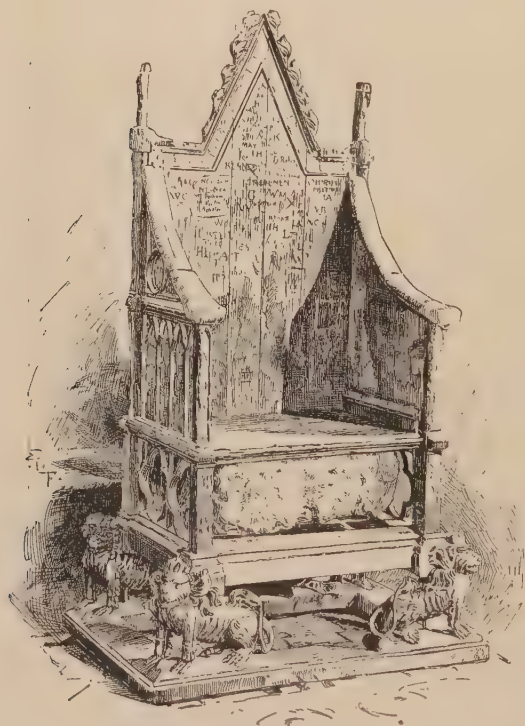
We feel sure that this preface of active life, the short interval between youth, with all its subordinations, and married life, which has so many subordinations too, even for a Queen, was her Majesty's least happy period.



PIN-CUSHION USED BY THE QUEEN IN THE ROBIN-ROOM
OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY ON CORONATION DAY.

(By permission of the Rt. Hon. the Marquis of Normanby, D.L., etc.)

It was natural that the reaction should have been strong, from the carefully guarded schoolroom to the absolute freedom of a position in which every individual around her was eager to carry out her lightest wish. But should, some hundreds of years hence, another Shakespeare arise in England, and the history of Queen Victoria be chosen as that of the Henries was chosen by his prototype for the subject of some great drama, the poet would find in this brief period of royal waywardness those broken lights which are most favourable to a dramatic narrative. She was not communicative to



THE ANCIENT CORONATION CHAIR IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY, USED AT THE QUEEN'S CORONATION.

her mother; was it that childhood had haunting grudges against too much repression? The Duchess had laboured in her service night and day, neglecting nothing; a most anxious, self-denying, and vigilant guardian, giving up all society and recreation on her own part for the sake of so important a charge; but from the moment in which her daughter stepped beyond her authority she found herself a guardian no longer. "The Queen never spoke a word to her of public affairs." She was no longer the head of her own house, the first person to be considered, and "never approached the Queen unless specially summoned." "Before every meal an official was sent to request the Duchess's presence." This might be etiquette; but, if so, it were etiquette "more honoured in the breach than in

the observance." No doubt Lord Melbourne, who was her Majesty's chief instructor in her duties, a man of the world, full of all those conventional prejudices against female influence, and especially that of a mother, had warned his young Sovereign to keep affairs of State entirely between herself and her councillors, and to say nothing to anyone, especially not to the Duchess, who might have opinions of her own on such matters.

"In the midst of all her propriety of mind and conduct," says Greville about this time, "the young Queen begins to exhibit slight signs of a peremptory disposition, and it is impossible not to suspect that as she gains confidence, and her character begins to develop, she will evince a strong will of her own." An anecdote of a very different kind is, however, told

of her Majesty's first interview in her new character with the Duchess of Northumberland, who had been for some time her governess. The Queen was instructed that etiquette required her to receive the Duchess seated; a formality to which she was with difficulty persuaded to assent on condition that it should first be explained to her visitor. But when the door opened and the Duchess appeared, etiquette was flung to the winds, and the Queen rushed forward to welcome and embrace her.

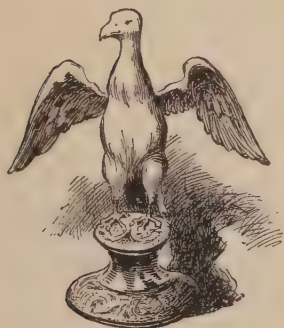
A similar contradiction appears in the records, on one side of her extreme devotion to business, reading every paper with the most anxious care, and declining to sign anything which she had not fully understood; and the pleasant levity on the other, of which we have a glimpse in the young maid-of-honour's declaration that it was great fun to play at being Queen. No doubt the extreme youthful solemnity of business was balanced by an underlying sense of the royal sport it all was, the conscientiousness being part of the play. A little crowd of joyous companions at once gathered round the young Queen. We hear of a band of seventeen persons accompanying her on her ride, bewildering the turnpike collectors, and of a groom equally bewildered, who left his silk handkerchief in pledge for the halfpenny toll which he had no money to pay! And there were dinners, dances, theatres, and every kind of enjoyment where all had been so quiet. Lord Melbourne, the genial and indulgent Prime Minister, made everything smooth, and surrounded her Majesty with pleasant cares and agreeable advice, no doubt encouraging all the gaieties of the youthful emancipated Court, and making even the labours of her new position, so delightful in their novelty, a great new diversion for the active mind of his pupil. But it would probably be but the finest and most agreeable kind of egotism which the Prime Minister would teach—that which pleases its own feelings by the blandest politeness to others, but lets nothing stand in its way.

One little episode of royal perversity there was at this time, which would have been most serious to every constitutional interest had it been repeated or continued. Lord Melbourne, the Queen's first Minister, tutor in all the duties of State, and devoted friend, was called upon in the exigencies of political life to resign, and Sir Robert Peel, the head of the party which had come uppermost in the struggle, was, according to usage, sent for to form a new Ministry. But the new Conservative Premier

was brought to a sudden standstill by the refusal of the Queen to change her mistress of the robes and ladies of the bedchamber, a proceeding entirely



THE
CORONATION
SPOON.



THE AMPULLA OR RECEPTACLE
FOR THE CONSECRATED OIL
FOR ANOINTING.

unforeseen, which filled all political circles with astonishment and dismay. The kings before Victoria had often given a great deal of trouble by their interference, but perhaps had never stopped the wheels of the constitution in any such arbitrary way. The new Minister did not know what to do. It is very likely that the old ones chuckled behind backs at the discomfiture of their successors, but even they could not but feel that such a course of procedure would work the direst havoc in all the rules of Government. The excitement of the crisis may be conceived; everything was at a standstill. The Ministers



"WE HEAR OF A BAND OF SEVENTEEN PERSONS ACCOMPANYING HER ON HER RIDE" (p. 37).

going out stood ready with their keys and seals of office to give up to their successors, laughing in their sleeves and immensely flattered and amused by the despair of the others; while those on the threshold reasoned, entreated, remonstrated—all in vain. Sir Robert Peel, with a despairing appeal to her young Majesty's practical good sense, said to her "that if she refused to part with her ladies, it was useless to send for him"; to which the young lady replied with great spirit, "You will be pleased to recollect, Sir Robert, that it was not my wish you should be sent for at all!"—a famous little trumpet note of individuality, but the most distract-

ing utterance to come from a constitutional Queen. "They came three times to the charge," wrote Lord Palmerston to the British Ambassador at Paris. "First Peel made the demand singly: then he brought to his aid the Duke of Wellington, and again he came back with the unanimous opinion of the Cabinet that was to be. The Queen, almost unadvised, stood firm against all these assaults; showed a presence of mind, a firmness, a discrimination far beyond her years, and had much the best of it in her discussion with Peel and the Duke." It is needless to add that, after a moment of extreme discomposure and excitement, in which the wise uncle in Belgium and other influential persons were appealed to, the crisis came to an end, and her Majesty at last perceived that it was impossible in this way to stop the wheels of State.

This incident, though it might have proved much more grave than any personal error, was, we think, regarded by the country at large with more amusement than disapproval. By some curious provision of nature the mistakes of youth, especially when seasoned with a little mischief, are ingratiating to the general mind, and there is nothing that is less popular than perfection. Besides there was something so perfectly natural and spontaneous in the sparkling eyes and unanswerable girlish logic of the young Queen, that even the most serious "could scarce forbear to cheer," perplexing and vexatious as the crisis was to those thus held back on the threshold of power.

There was now, however, another influence on the way which was to balance all these waywardnesses, and bring to a milder and gentler maturity the lively spirit of the young Queen. We have already referred to the little cousin born at the Castle of Rosenau a few months after the little Victoria of Kent, her little peer and rival in the anecdotes of the nursery and in the affection of the German grandmother, to whom the two infants bore the same relationship. The relation of the two children to each other seems from the very first to have occupied the thoughts of King Leopold, the kind and wise uncle of both, one of those born statesmen and controllers of the world who seem to exercise such an influence over future events, and over the wayward impulses of nature, as are to be found nowhere else, out of a fairy tale. He and his astute councillor Stockmar seem to have decided in their cradles the future fortunes of these children, the girl with the most splendid prospects in the world, the boy with none at all, except the empty honour of a princely title which hampered more than it aided a youth of promise and high spirit. Many such plans have been heard of both in public and private history: but it is seldom that they come to anything, and more seldom still that they tend to happiness. In this case, however, two subtle and commanding brains were set to work from the first to bring the foregone conclusion about—three indeed, we may say, for no doubt the Duchess of Kent must have worked more or less

in the same interest, though not so powerfully, out of favour as that poor lady was. If we might paraphrase the words of the poet, "He for God only, she for God in him," we might be permitted to say that it was she for Great Britain only, he for her kingdom in her, which was the basis of the education of this royal pair.

Without a word said or a suggestion breathed into either youthful mind, the task of this training, as regarded Prince Albert, was taken up at once, under the keen and close supervision of the man who had all but filled the position for which he educated the boy. No one in the world could have



CHILD'S PLAY.
SHORTLY, can't get over! can't get out!

CONTEMPORARY CARTOON BY "HB" (JOHN DOYLE) UPON THE BEDCHAMBER AFFAIR, 1839 (p. 39).

so closely studied the duties of that position and its necessities, and he had determined from the first that his nephew should fulfil the scheme of duty which he had chalked out for himself. It is deeply interesting to show the seeming natural and easy development which followed this plan in the skilful hands of Leopold and his coadjutor. The Prince was even better material to work upon than the Queen, being without the waywardness which made the little Princess so provoking and attractive.

The cousins had scarcely come together at all in their early life; indeed, they saw each other apparently for the first time when the Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha visited England in 1836, when both these young people

were seventeen, of the same age, agreeable and attractive in looks—two blue-eyed human creatures looking this great life frankly in the face, as hopeful and unclouded as became their years; the girl a little *espiègle*, loving to startle and to tease, the boy graver, disciplined and subordinate to the tips of his fingers, after the fashion of a German boy, and perhaps more or less aware by this time in what direction his careful education had tended. He is described by Baron Stockmar in a letter written on the eve of this eventful meeting to the anxious uncle, whose long-cherished plans were now about to be put to the test.

“Albert is a fine young fellow, well grown for his age, with agreeable and valuable qualities, who, if things go well, may in a few years turn out a strong, handsome man of a kindly, simple, yet dignified demeanour. Externally, therefore, he possesses all that pleases the sex, and at all times and in all countries must please.”

This was the external aspect of the youth; his mind, a more inscrutable subject, was largely discussed between the wise and anxious counsellors who hoped to see in him the model prince, the typical man, at once hero and sage. But even to these penetrating statesmen the youth's thoughts were as yet impenetrable, and could be regarded with hope only, not certainty. He had a pleasant reputation, if that had been of any consequence, as concerned the lighter qualities suited to his age, a light heart, a love of laughter as well as knowledge, and a capacity for keeping his fellow-students in a roar of genial fun, as well as of winning the approbation of the elders who were bent on fathoming the deepest secrets of his being. There is so much gravity in the story that the mirth is doubly welcome when we hear of it, and no doubt was quite as much in the young man's favour as his fine features and well-developed frame.

The Duke of Saxe-Coburg and his sons arrived at Kensington Palace in the end of May, 1836, and there is no record of the meeting except in the brief letters of the Prince, published in his *Memoirs*, which give few details. His aunt and cousin were “very kind” and “most amiable.” This is all the modest boy discloses, and probably there was not much more to tell. The world had its suspicions that something more was meant than met the eye, when the young cousins were thus brought together; but no gleam of consciousness shows itself in the kind, simple letters. The cousins had known each other all their lives, though they had never met before, and ordinary life has many examples of the pleasant familiarity, yet strangeness, of such intercourse. The father and sons stayed some weeks in London, and were at levees, Court dinners, and concerts, long prolonged, during which the young visitor had many “hard battles to fight against sleepiness,” so young was he, and so untried in fashionable dissipations. On one evening, at least, there was “a brilliant ball at Kensington Palace,” at which the young Germans, unused to such late hours, remained till four o'clock in the morning. The curious reader would like to know how often the cousins danced together,

and if each felt the charm and attraction of the other, amid all the music and the mirth. There were stories going, of which we remember to have heard some echo, of flowers bestowed and looks exchanged, the gossip of the ballroom, but these are not things likely to be specified in letters to the mother at home.

When the Prince left England, however, King Leopold, who was still, as always, watching over everything, broke the silence and wrote to his niece. The Princess replied with amusing but careless warmth, and a frankness which was too like indifference, apparently accepting the arrangement without hesitation, and lightly enjoining her uncle to take under his special protection "one now so dear to me."

Whether the King was satisfied with this too prompt adherence to his plans, or suspected any levity in the sudden assurance, we are not told. The chief person on the other side said nothing. He gave his cousin a little simple ring on her birthday, a present which was justified, as the Queen herself explains in a note to the Rev. W. W. Tulloch's "Story of the Life of the Prince Consort," by the fact that "her brother," the Prince of Leiningen, had made her a similar gift; and he went away upon the travels already planned for him, evidently not without thought of her, sending her little tokens of remembrance, such as a flower gathered on the Righi, a book of prints to show his route, and other trifles, very natural simple tokens of a delicate amity, perhaps to float away altogether with the morning mists, perhaps to ripen into warmer emotion, such as arises every day between youth and maiden hovering upon the verge of life.

The grave event of her Accession turned the young lady's thoughts away from these preliminaries of serious courtship. By-and-by her communications to her uncle became less satisfactory. The change that had taken place "had put all ideas of marriage out of her head," she wrote. She was too busy enjoying her wonderful new trade, going into every detail of it, reading every paper, curious, eager, taking full advantage of every novelty in her way, and especially of the novelty of doing what she liked and guiding herself by her own will alone. Her Majesty described herself in after days as "bitterly repentant" of this moment of caprice. It was her wayward and wilful time, when she would not be thwarted nor accept any decision but her own—a very great contrast to the cheerful calmness with which she had accepted her uncle's project a year before, but at least quite as natural. The extreme good sense of her explanation sprang, perhaps, simply from her desire to enjoy the moment without being troubled by any more momentous conclusion than where she should ride to-morrow or with whom she should dance to-night, but at least the good sense of her excuses was unanswerable; she was herself too young, she urged, so also was the Prince. The letter in which she gave forth these wise sentiments was written in the beginning of 1838, when neither she nor her cousin had yet attained the mature age of



"ON ONE EVENING THERE WAS 'A BRILLIANT BALL AT KENSINGTON PALACE'" (p. 41).

nineteen. Such a marriage, she said, would be considered by her subjects as premature. Moreover, his mastery of the English tongue was as yet very imperfect, and if he were to take up a proper position in England this defect ought to be remedied; with many other most cogent reasons for delay. She was now too sensible, as she had been too careless before, but nothing could be more admirable than her reasoning, and her uncle accepted the delay and the check to his plans, with a wise perception of the necessities of the situation.

The Queen, in after years, when she first gave the story of this period to the world, explained that there was really no change of opinion in her mind. She "never thought of" anyone else. If she were a little fantastic, coy, holding off at arm's length, though without any intention of abandoning, the plan, the next great change in her life, all this was nothing more than a young maiden at such a crisis has a right to be indulged in. She was wiser than the elders, who were tantalised by the postponement of their great object, and who no doubt felt that some other fancy might easily flit across so young a brain at any moment. And there were, of course, other suitors, of one of whom, the Prince of Orange, an amusing story is told. While his fate was still hanging in the balance her Majesty was seen to go to a window to look out after him as he mounted his horse and rode away. The ladies in attendance were greatly fluttered and excited, taking this for a sign of favour; but when, after watching out of sight the retreating figure, clothed in a scarlet uniform surmounted by a hat with nodding green plumes, the Queen exclaimed with a laugh, "How like a radish he looks!" the interested spectators felt that the matter was settled.

In the meantime the young prince, the true hero of the tale, who had by this time fully recognised the position, regarded the Queen's delay and hesitation with some natural impatience; he continued his travels, however, going to Italy, as the best occupation for his time of suspense. When he returned from that tour, it seemed time to take a more definite step, and he went to England with his brother on a visit; from which, however, he does not seem to have expected any particular results. "The Queen declared to my uncle of Belgium that she wished the affair to be considered as broken off, and that for years she would think of no marriage," the Prince himself wrote to one of his anxious friends, with perhaps a little suspicion of wounded feeling in the words. "I mean, therefore, with quiet but firm resolution, to declare on my part that I also withdraw entirely." How it was that, meeting with such serious intention of bidding each other a dignified farewell, the young couple should have rushed into each other's arms instead, the lady forgetting her wisdom and the youth his dignity, let other young men and maidens say. It is a mystery, yet as common as love is, and youth.

It was in October, in the year 1839, that the two young Coburg Princes

came to England. They brought with them a letter from King Leopold, which ran as follows:

"MY DEAREST VICTORIA,—

"Your cousins will themselves be the bearers of these lines. I recommend them to you. They are good, honest creatures, deserving your kindness; not pedantic, but really sensible and trustworthy. I have told them that your great wish is that they should be quite at their ease with you."



PRINCE ALBERT AT THE TIME OF HIS MARRIAGE.

(From the portrait by Sir William Ross, R.A.)

The young men arrived. Their cousin, no longer the little girl of Kensington in the homely, old-fashioned house, but a great Queen, received them at the top of the royal staircase amid all the magnificence of Windsor Castle, as if these two wandering knights had been emperors. But after this grand reception, the commonest of incidents brought back the princely

travellers and the royal circle into the sympathy of homelier life. Their portmanteaux, it is to be supposed, had gone astray, as happens to so many of us—or at least did not arrive in time—and the dinner-hour was near. “Their clothes not having arrived,” the Queen writes in her Journal, “they could not appear at dinner, but came in after it in spite of their morning clothes.” There was a circle of visitors assembled, and no doubt some little tremor in the air, noddings and whisperings, and a close watch kept on all the looks and words exchanged by the cousins. Prince Albert was now full-grown, in all the freshness of twenty, the age at which a handsome youth is handsomest, before any of the bloom has been rubbed off. “There was in his countenance a gentleness of expression, and a peculiar sweetness in his smile, with a look of deep thought and high intelligence in his clear blue eyes and expansive forehead that added a charm to the effect he produced in those who saw him, far beyond that derived from mere regularity or beauty of features.” He was unanimously allowed to be as good as he was handsome, full of high purpose and the most delicate conscientiousness. No lover more likely to please ever appeared in enchanted castle or lady’s bower.

Windsor Castle is as worthy to be the enchanted castle of such a story as any pile of builded stone, and many a scene of romance these ancient towers have seen! But never since James of Scotland from his prison saw, deep down in the moat garden, “the fairest and the freshest younge flower” that ever eyes had looked on, has a prettier drama been enacted there. “The way of life in Windsor during the stay of the Princes was much as follows: The Queen breakfasting in her own room, they afterwards paid her a visit there; and at two o’clock had luncheon with her and the Duchess of Kent. In the afternoon they all rode, the Queen and the Duchess and the two Princes, with Lord Melbourne and most of the ladies and gentlemen in attendance, forming a large cavalcade; there was a great dinner every evening, with a dance after it three times a week.” This pleasant routine went on for a short time without incident. The brothers had arrived on the 8th of October, Prince Albert and Queen Victoria being then both of a mind (to believe their own statements) that the tacit understanding between them was over, and that they would not marry, not they, for years to come. But before the fifteenth something had changed the notions of the young pair. What it was who could tell? They were just as young as ever, they who had so prudently concluded that they were much too young for such a step; but they no longer felt themselves too young. Whatever clouds had been on the horizon had all blown away before the soft breezes on Windsor Hill, the air of the woods through which they had ridden together, the morning talks, the evening gaieties. Yet the wooing was not all easy and plain before them, as before other pairs. These were not the days in which any noble knight, even if not a prince, could address a Queen. What had to be said must be said by her, not by him—a strange necessity. But no doubt it

seems a more difficult matter in talking of it than it was in the doing of it. When the young Prince was summoned alone to the young Sovereign's presence, no doubt the first glance, the first word, was enough to tell him that his cause was won. "After a few minutes' conversation the Queen told him why she had sent for him." A happy mist falls over all that was said and done. When the young pair emerge from it and are seen again of ordinary mortals, there is a maze of gladness about them which, all unawares,



WINDSOR CASTLE.

each expresses in almost the same words. "These last few days have passed like a dream to me, and I am so much bewildered by it all that I know hardly how to write; but I do feel very happy," writes the Queen to her uncle—he to whom this news would be so welcome. And, "More I can't write to you, for at this moment I am too bewildered," says the Prince on his side, striking, as became him, a bolder note, and throwing his rapture and happiness into the words of the poet—

"Das Auge sieht den Himmel offen,
Es schwimmt das Herz in Seligkeit."
"Upon the eyes Heaven opens bright,
The heart is flooded with delight."

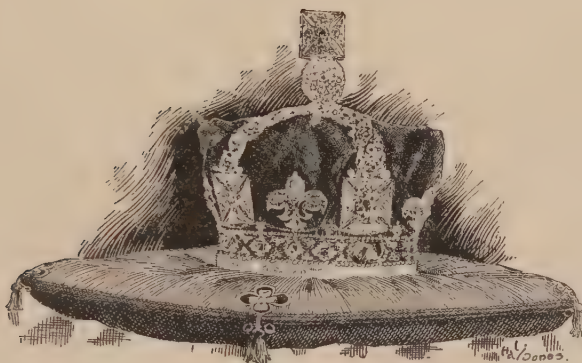
There is no more beautiful passage in poetry than that from which these lines are taken, a passage familiar in all its beautiful warmth and completeness to the correspondent in whose kind ear the Prince poured forth his joy.

All this charming little idyll is told to us by the chief actor in it, the Queen herself, in the fulness of her heart; and the wonderful humility and simplicity with which she throughout puts herself in the secondary place is one of the most remarkable exhibitions of womanly nature that ever was revealed to the world. "How I will strive to make him feel as little as possible the great sacrifice he has made," she says in her Journal, noting down the events of that wonderful day. "I told him it *was* a great sacrifice on his part, but he would not allow it." No doubt the Queen's imagination pictured forth a whole brilliant world of conquest and victory which he was giving up to be her companion. Never was a more complete instance of that softening and tender humility which is one of the first consequences in a generous and pure mind of happy love. A delicious wonder took possession of both to find themselves thus raised above the common earth.

The happy agitation in the Castle that day, the letters that were written, the whispers that ran through the excited Court, the couriers that were sent forth laden with news, may be easily divined. Prince Ernest, good brother, full of sympathy and joy, was sent for instantly to congratulate and rejoice with the young pair. The kind Premier in attendance, Lord Melbourne, approved and rejoiced too, and there was nothing but happy wishes and anticipations round them. "He seems perfection," says the young Queen in her happiness. On the very day on which this was taking place, King Leopold from the Belgian palace, not dreaming, for all his wisdom, how rapid a course young hearts could take when left to themselves, was writing to his niece in playful commendation of her cousins. "I am sure you will like them the more the longer you see them," he said, all unaware that just then the young man, of whom he had been saying that no "puppy-like affectation" was to be found in him, had become "perfection" in the royal lady's eyes. How sincerely happy he was need not be said. "I have almost the feeling of old Simeon," he writes with affecting tenderness, "'now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace.'"

Thus that gay period of uncontrolled youth, when everything was on the surface, and all the long-restrained waywardness of a too sober childhood had got vent, came to a close. It is well to know that there was this headlong moment of natural impulse in a life so admirably regulated, in which the girlish wilfulness, so far as there is any appearance, never showed again. Perfect virtue and faultlessness, though so desirable, almost disappoint our wayward humanity by a strain of elevation too high for us. It is a pleasant break upon the shining level to find in the young Queen who dazzled all eyes

by the graceful propriety of her demeanour at the period of her succession, and who was to lead so long a life of virtuous self-denial, this fibre of girlish folly after all, an inclination towards fun and mischief, a love of her own will and way which, if sometimes harsh in the great ignorance of youth, was no more than the mere pranks of adolescence, unnoticed in others except by a parental laugh or reproof. When Queen Victoria passed the boundary "where the stream and river meet," this wilfulness seems to have dropped from her character at once and for always. Her youthful individuality, doubled in force yet subdued by the addition of the other, the partner who had been so carefully trained for her, took without hesitation the higher path—to which her real nature must always have tended, or the transformation could not have been so complete.



CROWN USED AT THE QUEEN'S CORONATION

CHAPTER III.

MARRIAGE AND MARRIED LIFE.

IN ordinary cases, when the climax of the youthful story has thus been arrived at the suspense is over, and the happy marriage may be told in a sentence, all the real (or perhaps it would be better to say the ideal) drama of the love tale being played out; but the position of the Queen was so unique and remarkable that this was not at all the case in her circumstances. It is the lover usually who has the troublesome part after an understanding has been arrived at. It is he who has to disclose their mutual intentions, to meet all the external difficulties, the frowns, if there are any, of parents or guardians. But a personage so exalted as the Queen had to play both parts, and bear all the brunt of public announcement and explanation in her own person. When a happy girl of twenty tells her own tale, it is generally to the most sympathetic ears, and the confession is understood at half a word, ends in an embrace, and is received with an emotion almost as great as her own. But very different were the trials which lay before the young Queen, who had to appear in the face of day and before an assemblage of eager and curious men, the representatives of the nation, and say that which is first murmured on a mother's bosom, or whispered to friend or sister amid smiles and tears, by even the most highly placed of maidens below the throne. These announcements, which she had to make in her own person, must have hovered like a cloud over the young pair while they still remained together in the first joy of their betrothal. All the intimate circle of the household of course knew what had happened, and rumours flew everywhere about the country as well as to the rejoicing relatives abroad; but not a word was said of it in public while the visit of the Saxe-Coburg Princes lasted. A month of happy life ensued—Albert becoming more and more "perfection," and all the affinities in the two characters coming out and uniting them more and more closely. With that charmed period the historian has nothing to do. It fled on among the brightness of the Windsor life, the freedom, the gaiety, the morning rides and evening dances, and, what was probably the most delightful of all, the long talks in those autumn mornings, the mutual consultations, and all the plans for a perfect life which arise naturally between two beings who have just elected to pass that life together. It seems curious enough to us,



"THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE WINDSOR LIFE . . . THE MORNING RIDES" (p. 50).

knowing as we do the wonderful elevation which she had it in her power to give, that the chief idea in the Queen's mind was of the "sacrifice" which her lover was making for her, he the younger son of a petty German Sovereign, she the Queen of the greatest empire in the world. Perhaps, as the narrative goes on, the reader may be brought to see that this perception of the heart was not so much without foundation as, at the first glance, it would seem to be. However, they had a month of happy companionship, learning to know each other and to feel the mutual satisfaction of kindred souls, before any other step was taken. When the young lover and his brother returned to Germany, common life and its cares came back, and the Queen had to nerve herself for the ordeal before her.

The first announcement was made to the Privy Council, that large and somewhat heterogeneous body, made up of all celebrities and distinctions, which has so little to do with matters of national importance practically, yet has a right to the first telling of any momentous change in public affairs. It was the same assembly which had gathered round her Majesty two years before to witness her first step in public life and to swear allegiance to her, the first in the nation. The situation is so peculiar that we know no precedent for it, unless it might be the ill-omened one of Mary of Scotland. Queen Elizabeth had certainly never had any such announcement to make, and Queen Victoria was younger, even now, when she had occupied the throne for two years, than any other English Queen. She appeared before her first great circle of subjects with such a tale to tell as Privy Councillors, at least in their public capacity, are seldom called upon to listen to.

The young lady did it with the modest dignity which had from the first distinguished her. And here is the description of it she has herself given us, with her usual happy simplicity and straightforwardness. The Privy Council, knowing how important the sitting was, mustered strong. There were eighty gentlemen of them assembled in the "bow room on the ground floor of Buckingham Palace," whom this young creature, with her heart full, had to face alone, and tell what had happened to her. She had a bracelet upon her pretty wrist with the Prince's portrait, which "seemed to give me courage."

"Precisely at two o'clock" (the narrative is from the Queen's Journal) "I went in. The room was full, but I hardly knew who was there. Lord Melbourne I saw looking kindly at me with tears in his eyes, but he was not near me. I then read my short declaration. I felt that my hands shook, but I did not make one mistake. I felt most happy and thankful when it was over. Lord Lansdowne then rose, and in the name of the Privy Council asked that 'this most gracious and most welcome communication' might be printed. I then left the room, the whole thing not taking above two or three minutes. The Duke of Cambridge came into the small library where I was standing, and wished me joy."

This was not the only public intimation which her Majesty was forced, by the necessities of her position, to make of her intentions. The agitation which made the crowd of Privy Councillors indistinct to her, so that she "hardly knew who was there" no doubt veiled in the same way the

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The London Gazette

EXTRAORDINARY.

Published by Authority.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1839.

HER Majesty being this day present in Council, was pleased to make the following Declaration, viz.

I HAVE caused you to be summoned at the present time, in order that I may acquaint you with my resolution in a matter which deeply concerns the welfare of My people, and the happiness of my future life.

It is My intention to ally Myself in Marriage with the Prince Albert of Saxe Cobourg and Gotha. Deeply impressed with the solemnity of the engagement which I am about to contract, I have not come to this decision without mature consideration, nor without feeling a strong assurance that, with the blessing of Almighty God, it will at once secure

my domestic felicity and serve the interests of my country.

I have thought fit to make this resolution known to you at the earliest period, in order that you may be fully apprised of a matter so highly important to Me and to My kingdom, and which I persuade Myself will be most acceptable to all My loving subjects.

Whereupon all the Privy Councillors present, made it their humble request to Her Majesty, that Her Majesty's Most Gracious Declaration to them might be made public; which Her Majesty was pleased to order accordingly.

C. C. Greville.

EXTRACT FROM THE LONDON GAZETTE ANNOUNCING THE QUEEN'S AFFIANCE TO PRINCE ALBERT.

embarrassment of individual looks from the Queen, when nearly two months later she had to meet the great English Parliament and repeat her tale. And no doubt the universal sympathy which surrounded her helped her to get through this trial too. Crowds gathered on the way to see her going to Parliament on that wintry morning, a few weeks before her wedding day. They cheered her to the echo as she went along with her heart beating. Every seat was occupied in the House of Lords, and every voice which was

raised there after the intimation had been made was of one unanimous tone. Not only were politics forgotten in the universal sympathy, but all classes of politicians alike approved of the royal choice, and saw in it a guarantee of exemption from all those troubles which had made royal domestic life so far from exemplary in the preceding generation. The statesman who expressed the sentiments of England in its gravest Imperial dignity was as glad of the love-match as the youngest sentimentalist delighted with a love tale. "It frequently happens," said Sir Robert Peel, "that political considerations interfere with such transactions, and that persons in exalted stations are obliged to sacrifice their private feelings to a sense of public duty. Her Majesty, however, has the singular good fortune of being able to gratify her personal feelings while she performs her public duty, and to obtain the best guarantee for happiness by contracting an alliance founded on affection." In short, her happy love, so natural, so simple and true, was the greatest public service which the Queen could have done her country. And amid all the foolishness to which that unruly passion drives mankind, it is an exceptional privilege worthy a maiden Queen thus to be able to rehabilitate honest love, and bring it into favour and fashion, as not only the best but the wisest of sentiments, the legitimate crown of life and youth.

But though all was so happy in the main point, it is not to be supposed that the course of true love ran absolutely smooth in this case more than in others. No misunderstanding, indeed, ever seems to have crossed the happy record of the principal personages concerned, but never pair were more plagued by settlements and lawyers and troublesome relations than this royal pair were by the still more troublesome punctilios of Parliament, the contentions of party, and the petty jealousies of rank. Many of us on the lower levels of society profess to smile at the difficulties of precedence, and think it a question beneath the serious attention of reasonable people: but this is just one of the points in which ignorance is to blame for the want of sympathy so commonly shown in what a satirist might call the delicate distresses of comparative rank. A little exercise of imagination will at once show how galling it must have been to the Queen of Great Britain to know that her husband might be pushed from her side in any Imperial ceremonial by some whipper-snapper of a petty king's son or archdukelet not worthy to tie his shoe. Her Majesty herself sets these stinging slights before us with much force and truth.

"When the Queen was abroad, the Prince's position was always a subject of negotiation and vexation; the position accorded to him the Queen had always to acknowledge as a grace and favour bestowed on her by the Sovereigns whom she visited. While in 1856 the Emperor of the French treated the Prince as a royal personage, his own uncle declined to come to Paris, because he would not give precedence to the Prince; and on the Rhine, in 1845, the King of Prussia would not give place to the Queen's husband, which common civility required, because of the presence of an Archduke, the *third son of an uncle* of the reigning Emperor of Austria, who would not give the *pas*, and whom

the King would not offend. The only legal position in Europe, according to international law, which the husband of the Queen enjoyed was that of a younger brother of the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, and this merely because the English law did not know of him."

It cannot be wondered at that the refusal of the Parliament to settle this painful question, and the apparent want of generosity and liberality which made the House of Commons cut down the allowance made to Prince Albert from £50,000—the sum which had been granted to the husband of the Princess Charlotte—to £30,000, was very annoying to the Queen, who felt deeply the apparent slight to her betrothed. It was a kind of experience which broke harshly into the delight and happiness of the first engagement, in which everything was wholly satisfactory and happy. A check of this kind, given in the heyday of hope and pleasure, is naturally felt with a certain bitterness, and however good might be the reasons for the economy thus practised at Prince Albert's expense, it seems a singular and most unnecessary piece of neglect to have left his position undefined. It would seem, however, that this was due to negligence as much as to the party squabbles for which it afforded a fit occasion, and was not at all to be attributed to any lack of personal good feeling—an important distinction which the Prince himself, with his usual good sense, fully understood, and which the Queen allowed and believed—at least, after further acquaintance with "the Tories" had subdued that feeling of partisanship which she candidly acknowledges, and which was so natural in her circumstances. It was the Tories, then in Opposition, who procured these checks and discouragements to the young pair; and this was not likely to make the young Queen—jealous as she was for the honour of him whom then and ever afterwards she considered the most perfect of beings—more favourably disposed towards the party which she had been brought up to dislike.

Besides these important matters which were mismanaged by the Government and upset by the Opposition, there were lesser points which demanded much care and thought, arrangements about the Prince's household and its officers, and many other details necessary to the comfort of the new establishment. The Queen herself tells us, with her usual delightful naturalness and simplicity, that "precedents were searched for to see what the Prince's household should consist of, but the one commonly referred to," she says with fine scorn, "was that of Prince George of Denmark, the very stupid and insignificant husband of Queen Anne." Insignificant, Queen Victoria knew her own husband would never be, and her disdain of the ignoble comparison is charmingly naïve and natural.

All this doubtful and troublesome business made the interval between the Prince's departure and return a time of heaviness to the young couple. She had to bear in indignant silence all those apparent slights to him which were inflicted in her own name, angry and wounded as she was by them; and he, for his part, was virtually giving up all the ease and charm of German

home life and his natural position, as well as taking leave of all who had been up to this time most near to him, while the warmth of his welcome in England seemed to be rendered doubtful by these unkindly debates. When, however, he returned to England a few days before the wedding, which was fixed for the 10th of February (1840), there was no coldness in the welcome he received. It is not on such occasions that the English people show any lack of enthusiasm. From the moment he landed, eager crowds, shouting and cheering, met and welcomed him everywhere. He was young and handsome, all that the popular eye wanted to content its broad general sense of what was befitting in a Prince and a bridegroom, and the people were delighted that their Queen was making a love match, more delighted with this mere fact than with all the grave Imperial reasons for it and all the admirable qualities of the bridegroom. It is one of the chief spells to which the simple popular imagination in England always answers. "It is this which makes your Majesty's marriage so popular," Lord Melbourne said; and there was not a humble bystander in the crowd who did not acknowledge so strong a claim upon the general sympathy.

The 10th of February rose dull and cloudy, with frequent showers, and when the bridal party set out for St. James's, where the marriage took place, through streets thronged with spectators, who kept their places for hours undaunted through the rain and cold, the dull morning was all unlike the "Queen's weather," which had already become a proverb. The bride was naturally, as is more or less the case with every bride, even the humblest, the chief point of attraction to every gazer. In all the accounts, however, that have been given of her Majesty's marriage in the volumes which have been inspired by her and put forth under her guidance, it has been the figure of the Prince which has been most prominent; and this fond wile of affection might almost make the reader believe that England was watching the Prince and his demeanour on this great occasion as much as that of her Queen. It is scarcely necessary, however, to say that, tender and beautiful as is the wifely love which would fain give this impression, it was not really so. The bride is the chief personage at every marriage feast, and pre-eminently so at this one, though she herself is often enough, as in this case, the only individual who does not perceive it. "The Queen's look and manner," Lady Lyttelton says, who was one of the ladies-in-waiting, "were very pleasing, her eyes much swollen with tears, but great happiness in her countenance, and her look of confidence and comfort at the Prince when they walked away as man and wife was very pleasing to see. I understand she is in extremely high spirits since. Such a new thing for her to dare to be unguarded in conversing with anybody; and, with her frank and fearless nature, the restraints she has hitherto been under for one reason or another with everybody must have been most painful."

The Queen, we are told, was received with "tremendous shouts" as she

drove slowly along from Buckingham Palace to St. James's, through such a crowd as had seldom assembled before even in loyal England. She was "extremely pale" as she passed along, under the gaze of multitudes, her



THE EVE OF THE QUEEN'S MARRIAGE: THE WELCOME TO THE PRINCE CONSORT.

mother by her side—crowned with nothing but those flowers which are dedicated to the day of bridal, and not even permitted the luxury of a veil over her drooping face. The lace fell round her, but left her royal countenance unshaded, so that all might see. Even at that moment she belonged to her kingdom.

When the procession returned after the ceremony, the courtly chronicle of the newspapers does not fail to record a change of expression quite according to all rules. Her Majesty had looked "anxious and excited" and "extremely pale" as she went to be married; but "she entered her own hall" coming back "with a joyous and open countenance, flushed perhaps in the slightest degree," and acknowledged the cheers with which she was greeted in the most smiling and gracious manner. Shortly afterwards, the showers and clouds disappeared as by magic, and the "Queen's weather" shone out triumphant. In the afternoon the bridal cortège set out for Windsor, driving in an open carriage. Almost all the way the road was lined by spectators, twenty-two

*This marriage was solemnized before
us this tenth day of February,
one thousand eight hundred & forty*

*Victoria R
Albert.*

FACSIMILE OF PORTION OF REGISTER AT THE CHAPEL
ROYAL RECORDING THE MARRIAGE OF QUEEN
VICTORIA AND PRINCE ALBERT.

miles of them, every soul turning out from every village and little town on the way. "Our reception," the Queen says, "was most enthusiastic, hearty, and gratifying in every way." When they reached Windsor the whole irregular line of the picturesque little town, from Eton upwards to the Castle gates, sparkled with lights, and Eton turned out as one boy, with one vast shout of delight and excitement to

greet the bridal pair. The entire school followed, a roaring wave of boyhood, accompanying them, singing round the carriage, from its own bounds to the last practicable step of the way as far as even schoolboys could penetrate. Thus, with a universal outcry of gladness and every demonstration of kindness and enthusiastic sympathy which a country could give, the young pair were escorted to the very door of their own house.

There is some truth, as well as an evident and transparent foolishness, in that expedient of fiction which terminates every story with marriage. It is scarcely credible that any imagination over sixteen could believe that the troubles of life end there, and that "to live happy ever afterwards" is the easy conclusion of the tale as soon as the hands of the lovers have been joined, and their early difficulties got over. But there is at the same time a certain human fitness and delicate justice in the thought, for there is no crisis so simple and complete in all the after life, none that bears telling so well or interests the reader so completely, or which is so entirely individual to the person who excites our interest. In after years a hundred complications come in, and the unity of the youthful tale is disturbed by many foreign events. Marriage is not only a beginning—it is also a conclusion, as death is; and when we pass beyond that termination, which should be all joyful, nothing remains for us but to go forward towards the other, in which for the survivors there is no joy—the final line which is made across the human pathway by that impassable barrier beyond which we can neither hear

nor see. The union is like the severance, a crisis which changes all things, and there is no more strengthening reflection to justify the hope that is in us, than that death too is a beginning as well as an end.

We cannot but believe that some such thought as this must have moved the Queen when long afterwards, in her sorrow and loneliness, it occurred to her to give the first memorials of her husband's life to the world. It was not a record of sorrow which she put together, but that tender and charmed episode of romance which makes a flowery spot in many, let us hope in most, lives. It is in this book ("The Early Life of the Prince Consort"), written in the deepest gloom of her bereavement, that we find these fresh and delightful and affecting details of her happiness. The long drive to Windsor lives again in these pages; the people all along the road coming out to gaze and bless and cheer the young pair with that admiration and sympathy which at such a moment are universal—delighted with the romance in which the meanest could take a share, and in the love match, and in the yet unfamiliar bridegroom, so young and gracious and handsome, and the sight of them together, a pair of blue-eyed simple lovers in the first quiver and trembling of their happiness, an embodiment of the drama which comes to most human creatures once at least in their lives. All

these details are set before us by the hand from which that other clasping and supporting hand had dropped, recalling in widowhood the blessedness of the bride. Besides the story, unconsciously picturesque and lifelike, the Queen gives us with touching simplicity the revelation of a mind so loving, so humble in its greatness, the heart not of a woman even, much less a monarch, but of a girl astonished at her own happiness, and grateful beyond measure for the love which she returned so fully and warmly—that it would be a hard heart indeed which could refuse sympathy to those outbursts of cordial and true feeling with which the tale is told. Shakespeare himself could not have made a more perfect revelation than this, and it may be said that no one has done the Queen so much justice as the Queen herself, though her entire soul was bent on giving solely the lineaments of another.



THE QUEEN IN HER BRIDAL ROBES.
(From the painting by F. Winterhalter.)

Perhaps the picture of the bridegroom is too elevated, too perfect, to produce an impression of reality, but no such thing can be said of the unconscious, quite unintentional, picture of the bride. To her, life began—the real life not only of happiness but of worthiness, the true life suddenly revealed out of the chaos of mock living which her stormy little episode of complete independence had been—upon her wedding day.

The Queen's confessions of imperfection are almost amusing in their innocence, as is the sudden reformation which was worked in all her habits. The Prince loved the early hours and tranquil pleasures of the country, and his young wife, who was not of that mind to begin with, conformed to those tastes with a happy docility which many humbler brides fail in, and soon learned to make his standard hers, and to repent of the contrary habits which looked by comparison wickedness. "They were at first very late in the morning, breakfasting at ten, which was the Queen's fault," says the penitent. But that weakness was soon surmounted, and the pair might be seen out in the noble park at Windsor, or wherever they might be, brushing the morning dews from the grass, and refreshing their young souls with the purity and sweetness of the early day. And before she had been a year married the young wife made to the young husband a pretty confession which was the highest of tender compliments. "I told Albert," the Queen says, "that formerly I was too happy to go to London and wretched to leave it, and how since the blessed hour of my marriage, and still more since the summer, I dislike and am unhappy to leave the country, and would be content and happy never to go to town." "The solid pleasures," she adds, "of a peaceful, quiet, yet merry life in the country with my inestimable husband and friend, my all in all, are far more durable than the amusements in London—though we don't despise or dislike them sometimes." This is an extract from the Journal, written in 1840, when she was twenty-one, with every pleasure of life at her command, and all the excitements which had delighted her so much on her escape from her serious childhood. But now other thoughts and a better inspiration had come. It is the confession of a reformed character, so to speak, feeling deeply the errors of her past and the glow of new virtue which came with happiness.

What was the young man thus suddenly elevated into the guide, almost the god, of this pure, ingenuous, and simple mind? This is what it is much more difficult to say. With all that has been written about him the young Prince remains, as he did all his life, a somewhat veiled and abstract character, not easily understood of the people. Of his goodness, his performance of duty, his devotion to his wife and the interests of her kingdom, there can be no doubt; but his individual features elude the spectator. There is a certain repression, a never-relaxing self-restraint, in almost all we find him saying. This was probably necessary in the very delicate circumstances in which he was placed, and perhaps also as a



"ETON TURNED OUT AS ONE BOY, WITH ONE VAST SHOUT OF DELIGHT AND EXCITEMENT, TO GREET THE BRIDAL PAIR" (p. 58).

counterbalance to the very frank and effusive nature with which he had to deal; but it was, and continued to be all through his life, a hindrance to that true appreciation which his character deserved. The Queen's aim through her first book was to make her husband clearly known; but the result was to make herself known, an object she never contemplated, while scarcely removing one fold of the veil which covered him to all except those who loved him. Something of this was no doubt owing to the severity of his education, which from his childhood had been directed to this very point—to make him everything that was needed by his royal yoke-fellow, a model of duty, a prop for her in all necessities, a restraining and elevating influence over an impulsive nature. This severe training weakened the spirit which, if we may employ such a paradoxical expression, it made strong. Even his fine features possess the same quality; they reveal nothing, they are impassive as a mask, if as a mask regular, harmonious, and strong. He was a rock to support her who was his mission and career as well as his adoring wife, recognising scarcely any limit of possibility in the exertions he made for her; but so far as regarded himself this charge took from him the spontaneous, natural spring of living, his very hold upon life being weakened by his over-preparation for it. The reader cannot but feel, in all the reports of those early days, the gravity of the central figure, saying little, never unbosoming himself, answering the enthusiastic outbursts of love with a quiet word, in which there is much implied but little uttered, and which, though it always seems to satisfy the person to whom it was addressed, gives the spectator a momentary chill as of an inadequate response. Against the outward effect of this extreme discipline of self-repression Prince Albert had to contend all his life, so far as the public was concerned. Fortunately, within the most intimate circle of those who knew his heart, and especially by her to whom it was wholly devoted, this chill never seems to have been felt.

One of the first things to be done when the dream of the honeymoon began to solidify into the common course of life, was to set in order the royal household, which had fallen sadly out of gear, and would seem to have been for a time as extravagant and ill-regulated as ever household was. The Queen, in her extreme youthfulness and indifference to such matters, had taken no note of what was going on, and her mother had no authority; so that the reformation was urgently called for. It gives her Majesty another opportunity to glorify the power of her husband, of which she takes eager advantage. All the glory, all the credit she bestows with a liberal hand on him, and would fain make out, if she could, what she seems to have sincerely believed, that never were such sacrifices made or such blessings shed around him by any noble husband upon the simplest cottage maiden whom he had chosen for his wife. Such sentiments have a wonderful piquancy in their freshness and unfeigned

generosity and humility as coming from the lips of one who had everything to give.

This humbleness of self-estimation and overflowing gratitude for every mark of affection is apparent in every line with which the Queen sets before us the picture of her early married life. When her husband was about to part with the relations and friends who had attended him at his marriage, her tender sympathy was quite remarkable. At such a moment it may be pardoned in a young woman, even when all the external circumstances are reversed and the bridegroom gives more than he receives, to feel herself the principal person, and well worth any family relinquishment that may be made for her. This, in short, we suspect is the general feeling with brides, who are not always tolerant of regret on the husband's part for any old association, and are disposed to take any sign of the mingled feelings common to every change of life, any indication of possible loss on his part to balance the acquisition he has just made in her, as an offence against her newly acquired right to the entire possession of his heart. To such brides the Queen's example ought to come with especial force. Prince Albert's only brother paid the young married pair a more prolonged visit than the other members of the family, and when he too departed in his turn, the Queen's sympathy with her husband in the deprivation was most thorough, and even impassioned. "Oh, how I feel for my dearest, precious husband at this moment!" she exclaims, with all a young girl's fervour of feeling. "Father, brother, friends, country—all has he left, and all for me. God grant that I may be the happy person, the *most* happy person, to make this dearest, blessed being happy and contented. What is in my power to make him happy I will do." The Prince, on the other hand, assured his bride, even in the pang of parting with his own people, "that if I continued to love him as I did now, I could make up for all." These simple, mutual pledges and hopes, the interchange of sentiment which is common to peasants and to kings, shows upon what foundation the royal house was established. Paul and Virginia could not have said anything different had they ever come to that crown of youthful happiness.

And the young pair, so happy in their love, were also happy in their mutual tastes. Both were fond of music and art, and well instructed in both. Here is the Queen's own sketch of a day of their life, with all its occupations and amusements:—

"They breakfasted at nine, and took a walk every morning soon afterwards; then came the usual amount of business (far less heavy, however, than now), besides which they drew and etched a great deal together—which was a source of great amusement to them, having the plates 'bit' in the house. Luncheon followed at the usual hour of two o'clock. Lord Melbourne (the Prime Minister at the time) came to the Queen in the afternoon, and between

five and six the Prince generally drove her out in a pony phaeton. If the Prince did not drive the Queen he rode, in which case she took a drive with the Duchess of Kent or the ladies. The Prince also read aloud most days to the Queen. The dinner was at eight o'clock, and always with the company. The hours were never late, and it was very seldom that the party had not broken up at eleven o'clock." There must have been exceptions to this rather severe rule, however, as "The Queen also gave many dinners, often followed by little dances; and they went frequently to the play, of which the

Prince was always very fond."

This quiet routine eclipsed all the gaieties of the past in the young Sovereign's mind. It recalls a little the domestic simplicity of her grandfather's life, which we are now irreverent enough to call dull; but with all the difference which lies between the happy youth which is so much blessed in the presence of one beloved object as to find anything shared by him delightful, and the hum-drum existence of waning days.

Lest the reader should tire of this idyll of wedded lovers, recounted by one of themselves, we may here fall back upon the experiences of a stranger, whose narrative shows that though flattered by the kind attentions of royalty, which are always so



AN ETCHING BY THE QUEEN, DATED 1841.

seductive, he was yet quite an unbiassed observer of the pleasant interior into which he was so graciously introduced. The Queen, it must be premised, had always been distinguished by much musical taste and accomplishment. In still earlier days immediately after her accession, Sir George Smart warned his orchestra to be on their mettle when about to play before the Queen. "We must be very particular," he said, "for if we are at all at fault her Majesty's ear will detect us." Prince Albert was a still greater connoisseur, a composer, and excellent musician. It was very natural, therefore, that when Mendelssohn was in London, being then at the height of his fame and a favourite in society as well as in musical circles, he should be sent for by this pair of amateurs. His letter to his mother, dated July 10th, 1842, two years after the Queen's marriage, gives a very pleasant account of this visit.

"I must tell you all about my last visit to Buckingham Palace. It is, as E. says, the one really pleasant and thoroughly comfortable English house where one feels *à son aise*. Of course, I know a few others, but still, on the whole, I agree with him. Joking apart, Prince Albert had asked me to go to him on Saturday at two o'clock, that I might try his organ before I left England. I found him alone, and as we were talking the Queen came in, also alone, in a simple morning dress. She said she was obliged to leave for Claremont in an hour, and then, suddenly interrupting herself, exclaimed, 'But, goodness, what a confusion!' for the wind had littered the whole room and even the pedals of the organ (which, by the way, made a pretty feature in the room) with leaves of music from a large portfolio which lay open. As she spoke she knelt down and began picking up the music, in which Prince Albert helped and so did I. Then Prince Albert explained the stops to me, and she said that she would meanwhile make things straight. I begged that the Prince would first play over something, so that, as I said, I might boast about it in Germany; and he played a chorale by heart, with the pedals, so charmingly and clearly and correctly, that it would have done credit to any professional; and the Queen, *having finished her work*, came and sat by him and listened, and looked pleased. Then it was my turn, and I began my chorus from *St. Paul*, 'How lovely are the Messengers.' Before I got to the end of the first verse they both joined in the chorus, and all the time Prince Albert managed the stops for me so cleverly—first a flute, at the *forte* the great organ, at the D major part the whole; then he made a lovely *diminuendo* with the stops, and so on to the end of the piece, and all by heart—that I was really quite enchanted.

"Then the young Prince of Gotha came in, and there was more chatting; and the Queen asked if I had written any new songs, and said she was very fond of singing my published ones. 'You should sing one to him,' said Prince Albert; and after a little begging she said she would try the 'Frühlings-lied' in B flat, 'if it is still here,' she added; 'for all my music is packed up for Claremont.' Prince Albert went to look for it, but came back, saying it was already packed. . . .

"At last the Queen went herself, and while she was gone Prince Albert said to me, 'She begs you will accept this present as a remembrance'; and gave me a little case with a beautiful ring, on which is engraved 'V.R., 1842.'

"Then the Queen came back and said, 'Lady — is gone, and has taken all my things with her. It really is most annoying.'

"I then begged that I might not be made to suffer for the accident, and hoped she would sing another song. After some consultation with her husband, he said, 'She will sing you something of Glück's.' Meantime the Princess of Gotha had come in, and we five proceeded through various corridors and rooms to the Queen's sitting-room. The Duchess of Kent came in too, and while they were all talking I rummaged about among the music, and soon discovered my first set of songs. So of course I begged her rather to sing one of these than the Glück, to which she kindly consented; and which did she choose? 'Schöner und schöner schmückt sich!' Sang it quite charmingly, in strict time and tune, and with very good execution. Then I was obliged to confess that Fanny had written that song, which I found very hard—but pride must have a fall—and to beg her to sing one of my own also. If I could give her plenty of help she would gladly try, she said, and then she sang the Pilgersbruch 'Lass dich nur' really quite faultlessly and with charming feeling and expression. I thought to myself, one must not pay too many compliments on such an occasion, so I merely thanked her a great many times, upon which she said, 'Oh, if only I had not been so frightened; generally I have such long breath.' Then I praised her humility—and with the best conscience in the world—for just that part with the long G at the end she had done so well, taking the three following and connected notes as one seldom hears it done."

This is a charming vignette of the life of the royal pair. The Queen who "put things straight" with her own hands, "who was fluttered and frightened

as she sang before the great composer, yet too amiable and kind to refuse," and who knew so well what she was doing even in her nervous shyness, makes a most attractive picture. The reader will perceive that even to Mendelssohn, his countryman, the Prince in the background still remains a veiled figure, and, though he too played and sang to the admiration of the looker-on, made no such impression as the always real, lifelike, and attractive personality of the Queen.

Another domestic amusement and interest, to which the Queen herself refers, was brought disagreeably before the public notice some years later. This was etching, which the Queen and Prince took up with enthusiasm, producing many examples, some of which were stolen and taken to a print-seller, who seized upon them eagerly, with the intention of reproducing and selling them, counting on the interest of the British public in everything which came from the Queen. This unscrupulous attempt, which was, however, at once prohibited and put a stop to, revealed to the world another pleasant chapter in the royal life. For the etchings of the Queen and Prince were in great part studies of the babies who had begun to occupy the nurseries, the well-known Princes and Princesses of to-day, then infants and the delight of their young parents. The fond little portraits "at six months," "at one year," of the little Princess Royal and Prince of Wales—happy memoranda of infancy which to parents are beyond price—were the things which charmed the leisure of the royal amateurs; and certainly there was no mother in the country who did not sympathise with this pursuit. The inclination of both for art was well known. The Queen's instructor in drawing had some years before committed himself to the statement that the Queen, if she had not been the Queen, might have been the best female artist of her time: and Prince Albert painted pictures of historical subjects which "he did beautifully," according to the opinion of his wife. These statements are to be taken for what they are worth, which perhaps was not much; but, at all events, the royal pair agreed in a strong liking for art, and possessed some powers of execution, the source of much pleasure to themselves, whether of high value or not.

Another habit of theirs will call forth the sympathy of many, especially in Scotland. It would seem to have originated with the Prince, whose Lutheran education and the habit of less frequent participation in the Holy Communion than is now usual made that great religious solemnity a greater event than it can be when it is the habit of every week or, indeed, of every day. (It must be remarked that the Anglican Church was then by no means so exact in this observance as now, and that one celebration in a month was all that was general.) "The Prince had a very strong feeling about the solemnity of the act, and did not like to appear in company either on the evening before or on the day. He and the Queen almost always dined alone on these occasions." "Albert likes being quite alone before he takes

the Sacrament," says the Queen. "We played part of Mozart's Requiem, and then he read to me out of 'Stunden der Andacht' ('Hours of Devotion') the article on Self-knowledge."

This was the old devout custom in Scotland when the celebrations of the Holy Communion were few, and the whole countryside went up to "the Occasion," as to a Jewish feast. It gives a happy consecration to the story of the young household, when such an occasional retirement from the cheerful company, all ready to amuse and be amused, bore witness to the higher life which was never absent, a prevailing element, notwithstanding all distractions, in the dutiful existence of the Royal pair.



SPRIG OF ORANGE BLOSSOM FROM THE
QUEEN'S BRIDAL BOUQUET.

(By permission of the Rt. Hon. the Marquis of Normanby, D.L., &c.)

CHAPTER IV.

PUBLIC LIFE.

THE private life of the Queen has been throughout so sympathetic, and has so fully embodied all that is most congenial to the English mind in the way of domestic virtue and kindness, that her Majesty's biographer, both now and in future times, will often be tempted to forget the grander side of that existence which, in its simple details, has so much that charms the mind and attracts the interest. But these are not the first circumstances of life on the high level of a throne, where national and historical events form the common routine, occupying both mind and conversation with the familiarity which our day's work bears to us. And we must not forget that the story we are now writing is not only that of an exceptional woman passing with purity and dignity through all the vicissitudes of human life, loving, wedding, bearing children, making the most illustrious house in England an ideal home, and diffusing throughout the highest rank of society an atmosphere of moral purity and lofty meaning, but, at the same time, of one who is the first officer of the State, the first servant as well as the Sovereign of the country. There is something curious and piquant in the aspect which is taken by public affairs when they appear in such portions of the Queen's Journal as have been given to the public, and in her familiar letters, all so womanly and simple in tone, and expressing her sentiments with so much natural and spontaneous feeling. Private letters have often conveyed the most important scraps of public news; but these, though so valuable to the historical student, have generally been mingled with gossip quite untrustworthy, and in the highest cases are always additional to the common and dearer life which concerns the mind and the home. But the Queen's letters so clearly show these big concerns to be her daily business, perpetually close and present, that, seen thus through her eyes, they "suffer a sea-change"; and even across the mists of years we become more familiarly conscious of them than when they were transacted over our heads.

Few public questions, for example, have attracted more general interest, and even excitement, than the so-called Eastern Question, which has come

to more than one other exciting crisis since Queen Victoria was first called upon to consider it. But we are conscious that our personal interest in it is of a very different character from that which makes the Queen say, in 1840, "I think our child ought to have, besides its other names, those of Turko-Egypto, as we think of nothing else." The great events which affected, or might affect, the nation, to us interesting yet far off,



QUEEN VICTORIA IN 1840.
(From the painting by William Fowler.)

were to her her profession, her life, holding the place which our family affairs or our special business do to us. This is a specially royal peculiarity which is highly interesting to the student of human nature. In something of the same way, it is curious and interesting to the reader (especially to the young reader) to see how books are treated by their makers, the people whose trade and occupation it is to produce those great strains of poetry

which move generations, and outlive for centuries the small existence of the poet. Politics are the occupation and profession of the royal worker, as literature is of the writer—the grandest trade of all, and the most exciting; and the record of Queen Victoria's life is one of work, diligent and unceasing, transacted day by day, like that of him

“Who binds the sheaf,
Or builds the house, or digs the grave.”

Details of this serious and steady work abound in all the records. At one public crisis in the troubled year of 1848 we are told that 28,000 despatches were received at the Foreign Office alone, all which passed through the Queen's hands. The mere reading over of weighty papers of State gives an amount of occupation which it is difficult to over-estimate; and when we consider that this was but one of many branches of public business, some idea may be formed of the occupation at which, day by day, the Queen and her husband worked together with unswerving devotion, he aiding her as only so close a companion—being at the same time a man of high abilities and judgment—could. What she could not confide even to her mother could be trusted to him; though the Queen had to fight for this privilege, and not without a long struggle secured the right to share her business, as she did her thoughts, with her husband, and establish his claim to be consulted and taken into the secrets of statesmanship, and hers to have his co-operation and help in the whole of her work, and not merely the outside. It will have been observed in the record of the life of the young pair, given in the preceding chapter, that while a large portion of the morning was given up to the reading of despatches and other important documents, the Queen received a visit from the Prime Minister almost every afternoon; besides which she was liable to be called upon at any moment, should any political crisis or commotion of State arise either at home or abroad.

The difficulty which has been referred to, and in respect to which the Queen said playfully that her child should be given the names of Turko Egypto, was one of the first which occurred in her married life. It was a branch of the question which afterwards agitated the world, but from a very different point of view; for it was then France whose interference in Egypt was objected to, and who was suspected of evil designs against Turkey, which at the same time put our road to India in peril. Mehemet Ali, the ruler, or as he was then called, Viceroy* of Egypt, had rebelled against his sovereign, the Sultan, and France had taken it in hand to back him up and sustain his claims, with the intention, as avowed in the French Chamber at the time, of securing a serviceable ally in the Mediterranean, whose fleet, combined with that of France, might balance or destroy the supremacy of

* Egypt is still nominally under the suzerainty of the Sultan, though its ruler is no longer called by this name.



ROYAL GROUP, 1848.

FROM THE PAINTING BY F. WINGLERHAUF.

Britain upon the seas. There was no such convenient international highway as the Suez Canal then in existence; but what was at that time called the Overland Route, crossing the isthmus by means of a light railway, had recently been established and recognised as an extraordinary lightening and relief to the cumbrous long sea voyage. The combination was therefore very dangerous to Great Britain; and the Ministry had to declare that France could not be permitted, "directly or indirectly," to be mistress of "the road to our Indian dominions." How strange are the revolutions and revenges of the whirligig of time! The danger was averted by the interposition of the four Great Powers, Russia, Austria, Prussia, and England, which established themselves by treaty in a joint Protectorate of the Turks, and foiled France in her deep-laid schemes. So greatly does the aspect of the world, and the combinations possible in it, change in such a space as thirty years! The offence of France at being thus baffled was so great that she declared herself insulted, and the peace between England and her nearest neighbour was for a time in some jeopardy.

In those days, too, there were troubles within as well as without, such as occur periodically in the history of every nation. Deficiencies in the national revenue, paralysed trade, suffering among the people, political agitation amounting to sedition, overclouded the beginning of her Majesty's reign; and all this joined to troubles abroad, in China, in the West Indies, and, most serious of all, in Afghanistan, where British troops had fallen into a trap, and the British envoy had been murdered at Cabul, made the skies louring and gloomy on every side. All these things, as we have said, affect us on the lower and more tranquil level of the national life comparatively little. We are sorry and indignant, and perhaps anxious, if our own interests are threatened, and grumble at the increased pence in the pound of a war tax or poor rate; but these national calamities were as individual calamities to the Queen, matters brought daily and hourly within her notice, and of which every fluctuating scrap of news, every breath of rumour, came straight to her ear.

A change of Ministry, then imminent, was also a matter of very much closer interest to her Majesty than, whatever the warmth of political feeling, it can ever be to the mere spectators of the great national drama.

To the Queen it was a very serious matter when, for the first time in her reign, the Whigs went out and the Tories came in. It implied the loss from her side of her first political counsellor and guide, Lord Melbourne, who had led her first faltering steps into the ways of royalty, and been to her the most fatherly of friends. The Queen had been brought up in the traditions of the Whig party, and had warmly disliked the Tories, who, on their part, with no personal ill-feeling but with the instinct of party opposition, had done much to give justification to this feeling by their factious interference

in the matter of Prince Albert's allowance and other arrangements of the same kind. The extremely natural but impetuous girlish demonstration of feeling which had prolonged the reign of the Melbourne Administration in 1839, by the young Queen's refusal to part with her favourite ladies, was not a thing that could ever be repeated. Growing wisdom and more prudent councils shut out all petulance from her Majesty's actions, and made her accept the national will, as she has always done since, with constitutional impartiality. Indeed, it is sufficiently well known that the Queen has had to receive more than once in the position of Prime Minister—an office which involves a large amount of personal intercourse and in which an unsympathetic mind must be a daily and hourly vexation—men who were not agreeable to her either in person or principles. But we believe we are saying no more than the world knows when we add that she has never let either prejudice or repugnance stand in the way of her imperial duty, and has usually ended by finding a staunch friend in the political leader whom she accepted loyally from the hands of the people, while herself indifferent or indisposed to him. This is not a thing much taken into account in estimating the difficulties of the royal position, but nothing could be more real or require a greater strain of self-control. The Queen, however, proved equal, with her husband's sustaining help, to this ordeal, and soon learnt the lesson which experience happily teaches—that political differences are of much less importance than they appear, and that national prosperity and happiness were as much the first and greatest objects with the Tory Ministers as with the Whig, and also with the Whig as with the Tory. It was very fortunate for the Queen that, in parting with the kind, indulgent, and admiring devotion of Lord Melbourne, she was brought into relation with the noble spirit, “finely touched” to all “fine issues,” of such a man as Sir Robert Peel.

One of the first acts of this new Ministry was the establishment of an income tax by which to set right the deficient balance in the national purse. The Queen thereupon took one of the few independent steps which are possible to a constitutional sovereign. Although exempted by her position, as head of the State, from all taxes, she voluntarily put this exemption aside in such a moment of difficulty, and claimed her right as an Englishwoman to contribute her part to this important branch of “the Queen's taxes”—an act as wise as it was generous.

While all these labours were going on, and the young lady upon the throne was getting through an amount of business daily which only those acquainted with the manifold anxieties of official life could fully estimate, she was at the same time subject to dangers which are unknown in private life, and which even the highest officials are rarely exposed to. Three times in the two years after her marriage this young, innocent, and virtuous woman, so attractive to all who surrounded her, so free of all personal errors or



THE QUEEN RIDING OUT WITH LORD MELBOURNE.
(After the painting by Sir Francis Grant, P.R.A.)

disadvantages, so popular and beloved as she was, was shot at in the peaceful streets of her own cheerful and unseditious London. That the offenders were contemptible in the highest degree did not make the danger or the outrage less, for a bullet from the hand of a fool may do damage which all the wisdom of the wise could not undo; and the shock not only of alarm but of discouragement likely to be produced upon a sensitive young mind by such incidents was naturally very great. The first of these attempts took place in June, 1840, only a few months after the Queen's marriage, when a man named Edward Oxford fired at her when she was driving up Constitution Hill for her daily airing. "We had hardly proceeded a hundred yards from the palace," Prince Albert says in his account of the incident, "when I noticed on the footpath on my side a little mean-looking man, holding something towards us; and before I could distinguish what it was, a shot was fired which almost stunned us both, it was so loud, and fired barely six paces from us. Victoria had just turned to the left to look at a horse, and could not understand why her ears were ringing, as, from its being so very near, she could hardly distinguish that it proceeded from a shot having been fired. The horses started, and the carriage stopped. I seized Victoria's hands, and asked if the fright had not shaken her, but she laughed at the thing. I then looked again at the man, who was still standing in the same place, his arms crossed and a pistol in each hand. His attitude was so theatrical and affected, it quite amused me. Suddenly he again pointed his pistol and fired a second time. This time Victoria also saw the shot and stooped quickly, drawn down by me. The ball must have passed just above her head."

This was not a pleasant incident in an afternoon drive. The Queen, however, continued her promenade undaunted, with the simple and cheerful courage natural to her, and went on to her mother's to carry the first news of the outrage and set all anxiety at rest as to its effect. Afterwards "We took a short drive through the park, partly to give Victoria a little air, partly to show the public we had not lost confidence in them." The Queen at the time was in a state of health such as is often affected seriously by a very much smaller matter, but her sound nerves and high spirit defended her better than armour of mail. The wretched culprit was a dissipated lad of seventeen, apparently moved by nothing more serious than diseased vanity and a desire to be notorious. It is not even certain whether there was a bullet in the pistol he fired, and the convenient plea of insanity was brought in to save England from the bathos of executing such a being for high treason. Many years afterwards, during the sitting of a Commission on lunatic asylums, it was mentioned that this pitiful criminal was still vegetating among the madmen more respectable in their real misery than he—but not insane; "as sane as any of us," the doctor said who described him. Twenty-eight years of imprisonment (he was released in 1868) is perhaps, on the whole,

even to the meanest spirit, as hard a punishment as one swift hanging once for all.

Two years later, at very nearly the same spot, a still more exciting incident of the same kind occurred. Prince Albert saw, in the middle of the day, it being Sunday, on the return from church, "a man step out from the crowd and present a pistol full. He was some two paces from us. I heard the trigger snap, but it must have missed fire. I turned to Victoria, who was sitting on my right, and asked, 'Did you hear that?' She had been bowing to the people on the right, and heard nothing. I said, 'I may be mistaken, but I am sure I saw someone take aim at us.'" Nothing was said publicly, however, on the subject. No one among the



PISTOL USED BY EDWARD OXFORD IN HIS ATTACK UPON THE
QUEEN IN 1840.

(In the possession of the Authorities of Scotland Yard.)

Queen's immediate attendants had observed it, and the Prince, though he informed the police and the Minister, was half disposed to believe that he had himself been deceived. However, during the Sunday afternoon several corroborations turned up. A boy who was among the crowd had seen the incident, and had seen and spoken to a third spectator, who also perceived it. This was enough to set the police and authorities in activity, and the vague danger thus known to exist conveyed a certain excitement into the palace. "We were naturally much agitated, Victoria very nervous and unwell," says Prince Albert. Notwithstanding, the Queen went out for her daily drive as usual, though such precautions as could be taken were adopted. "You may imagine," continues the narrative, "that our minds were not very easy. We looked behind every tree, and I cast my eyes round in search of the rascal's face. . . .

"On our way home, as we were approaching the palace, between the Green Park and the garden wall, a shot was fired at us about five paces off. It was the same fellow with the pistol—a little, swarthy, ill-looking rascal. We felt as if a load had been taken off our hearts, and we thanked the Almighty for having preserved us for a second time from so great a danger." "Her Majesty told me she had expected it, and it was a relief to her to have it over," says another witness. "She said she could never have existed under the uncertainty of a concealed attack. She would much rather run the risk at once than have the presentiment of danger constantly hovering over her."

The assailant on this occasion was another wretched creature called

Francis, equally without any motive or inducement which could account for such a piece of cruel and cowardly folly. A month afterwards, just after the trial of Francis, a third incident of the same kind occurred, a deformed man called Bean being the culprit. The cumulation in itself must have had a very painful effect on the Queen's mind, since nothing worse could have occurred to the most hated despot than these repeated shootings, which threatened the most popular and best beloved of Queens. The first of the three gave his interpretation of it afterwards with great shrewdness. "If I had been hanged," said Oxford, "there would have been no more shooting at the Queen." The original criminal evidently despised his imitators. "I was not at all frightened," the Queen wrote to her uncle, "and feel very proud at dear uncle Mensdorff calling me *sehr muthig* [very courageous], which I shall ever remember with peculiar pride, coming from so distinguished an officer as he is." Thus the Queen gave proof of her valour under fire, not the less an ordeal that her assailants were so contemptible, and all the greater as being without any preceding stimulation, a danger encountered not in the strength of excitement but in cold blood. The young lady's royal calm contrasts charmingly with the emotion of her Minister, Sir Robert Peel, not generally a demonstrative man, who, on seeing her for the first time after this attempt on her life, could not restrain his feelings, but burst into tears, as honourable to him as her steady nerves and quiet courage were to the young Sovereign, only twenty-three, with all the susceptibilities of a young mother, and in the possession of such unusual happiness as must have made her life to herself doubly dear.

Shortly after this period the deplorable complication of affairs in India came to a close, and Cabul was taken, the British captives were set free, and British honour was vindicated. As soon as the news was brought to the Queen, she and her husband immediately set about devising honours for the troops to whom this re-establishment of credit and safety was due. This grateful duty was repeated at a later period, when the noble decoration of the Victoria Cross, a decoration not merely for great valour but for valour in saving others at the peril of life, was instituted.

As it is not our business to trace here the history of England under Queen Victoria, which is done in subsequent pages of this work, but only to touch upon those incidents in which her Majesty took a prominent part officially, we do not attempt to enter into the great questions of the time. The public functions of the middle period of the Queen's reign were many and various. She paid visits to sovereigns abroad, and received royal guests at home, all with great magnificence and universal satisfaction so far as appeared; though these visitors included Louis Philippe, the last King of France, and Napoleon III., the emperor who succeeded him, representatives of races and traditions so different that it

is strange to think of their being guests, one so soon after the other, at the same Court. The Queen began these interchanges of courtesy by a visit to France, an expedition not without some excitement, the circumstances being so unlike those which had characterised the intercourse of England with France for so many ages. The Queen herself gives in the first volume of



QUEEN VICTORIA IN 1841.

(From the painting by Sir William Ross, R.A.)

“The Life of the Prince Consort” an account of this visit, which is full of character and observation. King Louis Philippe and his family appear there in their most amiable and most charming aspect: but indications are not wanting that the Queen’s shrewdness had perceived something of the effusive and over-amiable humbug that existed in that Pecksniff of monarchs. The saintly goodness of his Queen, and the admirable character of several of his sons and daughters were, however, above all doubt, and it is evident that her Majesty found herself with a surprised delight in the bosom of a family of her equals—the guest of a reigning house as princely as her own, and of a nation which had trodden step by step (though far from amicably) with Great Britain in the way of civilisation and social progress. Nothing could be more charming than the simple and frank narrative. “The effect which the

excursion has produced is excellent," Prince Albert wrote to his correspondents in Germany. "The French were flattered and gratified . . . and the public here are thoroughly satisfied with the excursion. Six newspaper reporters were in Eu, who reported everything in the minutest detail. Lord Brougham wrote to me yesterday to congratulate Victoria and myself 'on the admirable effects produced by the late excursion to France, and on the sure tendency of this wise measure to create the best feelings between the two nations.'" This was the first of a series of visits to and from England which mingled in the happiest way the cordiality of private intercourse with the importance of national events. "Little passed of a political nature," the Prince adds, "except the declaration of Louis Philippe to Aberdeen that he will not give his son to Spain, even if he were asked; and Aberdeen's answer that, excepting one of his sons, any aspirant whom Spain might choose would be acceptable to England." This pledge, very soon to be broken, led to a personal remonstrance on the part of the Queen of the most spirited and admirable kind, to which we will come farther on.

A visit from the Emperor of Russia (Nicholas) was the next incident of this kind, and it had a still more distinct political character. Again there was talk of Turkey falling into pieces, and the great potentate of the North felt it necessary to make protestations on the subject. "I do not want," he said, "one inch of Turkish soil for myself, but neither will I allow anybody else to have one." This was evidently an allusion to the French interposition in favour of Mehemet Ali, and some idea of detaching England from France seemed to have been among the objects of the visitor. It may be interesting to quote here one or two of her Majesty's clear-sighted observations upon this special visitor, the first guest from Russia who had crossed her threshold. The admirable and lifelike picture of him is too long for our space, but it is full of force and vivid apprehension. "He is very much alarmed about the East and about Austria," says the Queen. "He is, I should say, too frank, for he talks so openly before people, which he should not do, and with difficulty restrains himself. His anxiety to be believed is very great, and his personal promises I must say I am inclined to believe." In a few years after this we were embarked in a great war against that cordial visitor, by the side of France, which country had on her side gone through tremendous convulsions and changed her rulers and economy of being in the most wonderful way, in the meantime. The changing combinations of politics could not be more strongly apparent than in glancing back from this day to that. Within her Majesty's reign and in the records of her memory how many downfalls and risings, how many changes of alliance, one Power now the assailant, now the champion of another, and all the round of Europe whirling in a perpetual turmoil. Our own country has always remained undisturbed within, though not able to escape from complications without; yet it is a consolation amid all vicissitudes to know that these complications,

however threatening, have never involved to Great Britain any serious calamity.

"The only things almost to mar our happiness are the heavy and threatening clouds which hang over our relations with France," the Queen wrote in 1844, "which distress and alarm us sadly; the whole nation here are very angry." The danger blew over, however, and Louis Philippe paid his return visit to the Queen, which excited a great deal of interest in England. "At two o'clock he arrived, this curious King; worth seeing if ever a body was," says Lady Lyttelton. "The Queen having graciously permitted me to be present, I joined the Court in the Corridor. . . . From the Armoury, amidst all the old trophies and knights' armour, and Marlborough's flag and Wellington's flag, we saw the first of the escort enter the quadrangle; and down flew the Queen, and we after her, to the outside of the door, on the pavement of the quadrangle." The Armoury here described (in Windsor Castle) is ornamented on each side with a small French flag, one of which bears the Bourbon lilies and the other the tricolour, the presentation of which forms the feudal quit-rent paid by the Dukes of Marlborough and Wellington for Blenheim and Strathfieldsaye. These are objects which would not, we presume, be specially called to the French King's notice, emblems of victory as they were. The corridor above mentioned runs round three sides of the quadrangle, and is one of the most striking features in the modern part of Windsor Castle. The French King's visit was very successful and agreeable. He was admired by the multitude, as a king who had once worked for his living and blacked his own boots could scarcely fail to be; and he went with great interest to all the places he had known in his previous visit to England in his lowliness, and—altogether unwitting what was before him—to Claremont, where his life was to end.

The royal visits, which gave so many glowing pages to the Court chroniclers, the passing agitation of national susceptibilities now and then, and vague threats of international disturbance, have less to do with our narrative than the routine of private life. One remarkable—we believe unparalleled—feature in the royal receptions just described is, however, worth noticing in any biographical sketch of the Queen, a fact which was stated by the Prime Minister in his place in Parliament to the honour of her Majesty and her wise and noble husband. "Two of the most powerful sovereigns in the habitable globe," Sir Robert Peel said, "had paid visits of state to England, but not one farthing had been asked from England for the expenses of their entertainment. Those visits of necessity created a considerable increase of expenditure; but through that wise system of economy which is the only source of true magnificence, her Majesty was enabled to meet every charge and to give a reception to these sovereigns which struck everyone by its magnificence without adding one tittle to the burdens of the country. I am not required," the Minister added, "to press

for the extra expenditure of one shilling on account of these unforeseen causes of increased expenditure. I think that to state this is only due to the personal credit of her Majesty, who insists upon it that there shall be every magnificence required by her station, but without incurring a single debt."

This was a wonderful contrast to the habits of the last generation of royalty, which was never out of debt and constantly making calls, with no particular reason, upon the liberality of the nation.

These festivities, however, were mere breaks upon much stormy weather in politics and in the national affairs. The discussion upon the Corn Laws filled England with hot controversy, which at length resulted, after many agitations, in their abolition and the adoption by the Government of Free Trade principles, to the great alarm of one powerful portion of the country and the entire shattering of the Conservative party. Throughout this long and serious conflict the Queen kept her constitutional place with unerring propriety. Though she had been very reluctant to replace her old and kind friend Lord Melbourne by a Conservative, her Majesty's excellent sense and perception soon learned to do justice to the patriotism and fine character of Sir Robert Peel. An incident most creditable to both characters occurred at one of the critical points of that great Minister's career. Anxious to show him some special honour, it occurred to her Majesty to offer to the much-badgered Premier that bit of blue ribbon which makes the highest heart beat, and which is perhaps the most highly prized honour which an English Sovereign can bestow. The Queen proposed, with the most delicate and most generous feeling, to give Sir Robert the Order of the Garter. In the same spirit of generous highmindedness the Minister declined that greatest of social distinctions. "He sprang from the people," he is reputed to have said, "and was essentially of the people. His heart was not set on titles of honour." The same honour, it is believed, was at a later period offered to Mr. Gladstone. Its gift to a commoner is the highest compliment possible to a British subject.

There is a curious anecdote related by Mr. Greville about this period which shows the Queen's attitude in political matters, her wise self-restraint in giving an opinion, in a very clear light, though it is trivial enough in itself.

Mr. Greville writes :—

"There has been a curious scene with Melbourne at Windsor, which was told me by Jocelyn, who was present. It was at dinner, and Melbourne was sitting next the Queen. Some allusion was made to the expected measure [Corn Laws Repeal], when Melbourne suddenly broke out, 'Ma'am, it is a d—— dishonest Act.' The Queen laughed, and tried to quiet him, but he repeated, 'I say again, it is a very dishonest Act'; and then he continued a tirade against the abolition of the Corn Laws, the people not knowing how to look, and the Queen only laughing. The Queen at last said that she wished to hear no more on the subject then, though she would be willing to speak with Lord Melbourne about it in private."



THE RECEPTION OF LOUIS PHILIPPE.
(From the painting by F. Winterhalter, in the Royal Collection.)

The next public event which called for the Queen's personal interposition was the affair so fatal to France, or at least to the existence and character of the Orleans family in France—the melancholy transaction known as “the Spanish Marriages.” Queen Isabella of Spain and her sister, the Infanta, had reached an age at which, though girls of other ranks are still in the schoolroom, queens and princesses are sometimes called upon to marry; and Europe was concerned to find fit husbands for these two unfortunate though highly-placed ladies. There were many candidates, among whom the Duke of Montpensier, a son of Louis Philippe, had been mentioned for the younger sister. The King, however, had declared himself in the most distinct manner on this point, pledging himself, indeed, to permit no such union, at least until after the satisfactory marriage of the Queen of Spain and birth of an heir to the throne. The issue is well known. Instead of keeping this promise, the too skilful head of the Orleans family, aided by the generally virtuous and conscientious Guizot, by some curious moral aberration which it is difficult to understand, patched up a most unsuitable and inappropriate marriage for the young Queen, and married the Infanta to the Duke of Montpensier, thus placing a son of France next in succession to the throne of Spain.

With a curious diplomacy, such as is sometimes used in families but seldom in the larger world, the hand of the old Queen of France, whose reputation and name enforced respect everywhere, was employed to make this arrangement known to Queen Victoria, and through her to her Ministers. Afterwards, on receipt of the significantly cold acknowledgment from England of this momentous news, King Louis Philippe made another good and gentle woman, Queen Louise of Belgium, the wife of King Leopold, the medium of his explanations, professing to be extremely distressed by the dissatisfaction of “notre bonne petite Reine,” who, he says, “sees only through the spectacles of Lord Palmerston,” and giving a most plausible and prolonged explanation of his own motives and actions. We are sorry that space prevents us from quoting at length the letter in which Queen Victoria replied. The “good little Queen,” whom the experienced royal plotter had thought it so easy to overcome with a display of specious arguments, showed herself as superior to his plausible reasonings as to his disingenuous acts, and there can be no doubt as to which Sovereign came best, even intellectually, out of the encounter. The disinterested desire of England for the best issue possible in view of Spanish interests, and the tricky plausibility of the French king, bent on excusing himself, and doubly accusing himself by so doing, came out most distinctly in this remarkable correspondence, which is published in an appendix to the first volume of the “Life of the Prince Consort.”

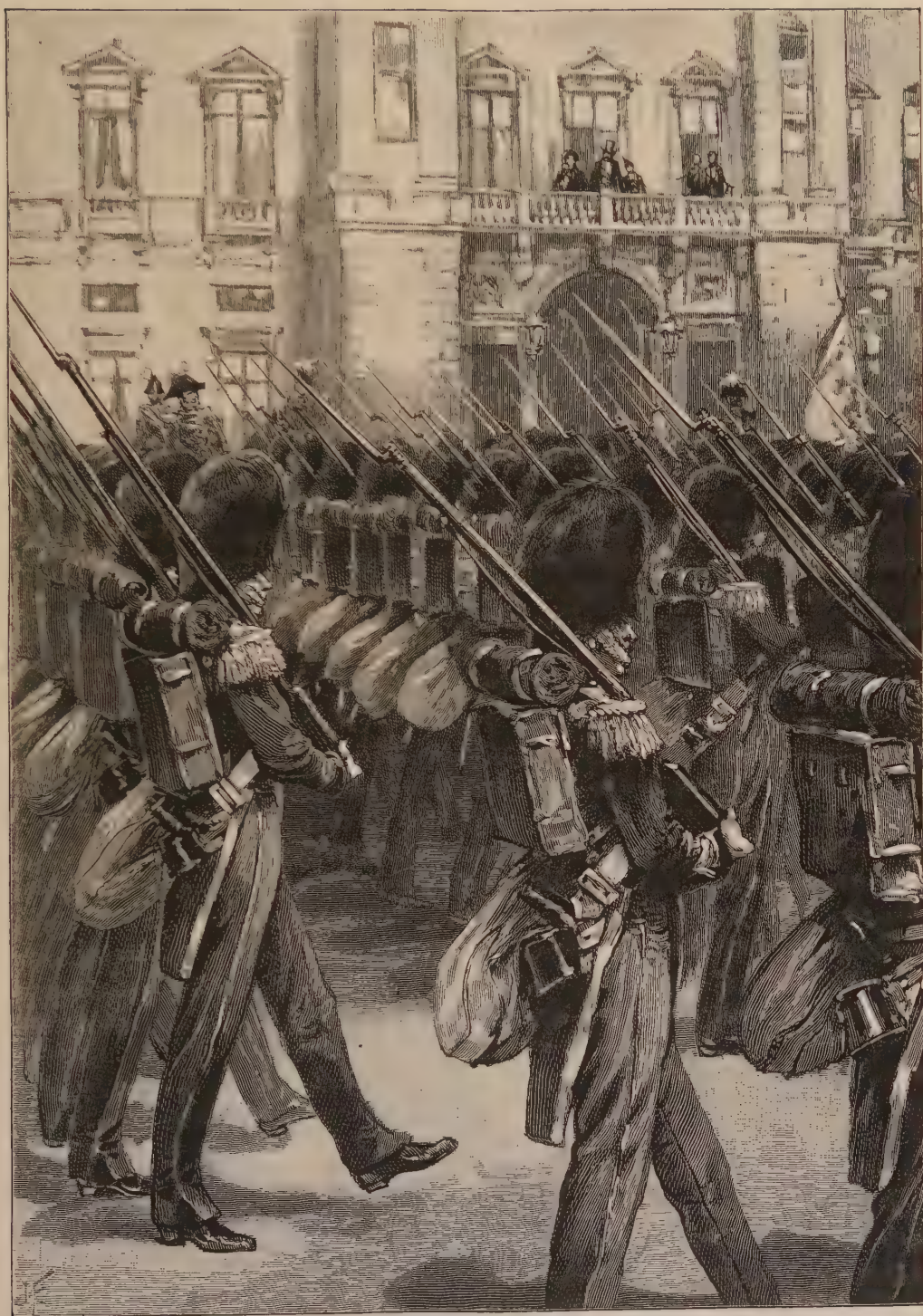
Two years later the Royal casuist—who had used all his powers to make the worse appear the better cause, and who had been so signally

defeated by the "good little Queen," whose reason never yielded, though her heart was always soft to the family she loved—was a fugitive seeking hospitality and shelter from the young pair whom he had vainly tried to deceive, but who were wholly ready to succour him in need. The state of affairs on the Continent in the terrible crisis of 1848 was at once the cause of the deepest concern and alarm, and of the most lofty confidence, to the English Queen. The alarm was for others—for friends, relations, members of the little band of royal personages between whom a certain community of feeling must always exist—the absolute confidence for herself and her own family. To see the members of the house of Orleans, so lately her splendid and happy hosts, "coming to us one by one like people shipwrecked," France in flames, Belgium menaced, and the Revolution spreading everywhere, was no small trial. The Queen speaks of the terrible anxiety of the period with a thrill of genuine feeling. "We have had since the 25th (February, 1848) enough for a whole life—anxiety, sorrow, excitement; in short, I feel as if we had jumped over thirty years' experience at once. The whole face of Europe is changed, and I feel as if I lived in a dream." The wretchedness of the crisis came still more clearly home to the safe and prosperous royal house in England when Germany took fire also, and even "our little Coburg, unprotected by its obscurity, shared the general fury. How can one be happy when one sees and hears of such misery all round?" the Queen asks. "The poor Hohenlohes and Charles Leiningen" (the Queen's sister and brother) "have suffered much. And those poor exiles in Claremont! Their life, their future, breaks our heart to think of."

Notwithstanding this warm sympathy for suffering individuals, the Queen never swerved from the strictest impartiality. "You will naturally understand," she wrote to her uncle Leopold, "that we cannot make *cause commune* with them, and cannot take a hostile position to the new state of affairs in France. If a Government which has the approbation of the country be found, we shall feel it necessary to recognise it." Which was loyally done, both during the short sway of a *doctrinaire* Republic, and when the mysterious representative of the Buonapartes, so long an exile in England, suddenly stepped to the front and re-established the empire. The Queen was so staunch to the position she had taken up that she both received and visited the new emperor with even more friendliness than she had shown to the old king, that wonderful personage having evinced the strongest desire to draw the bonds of friendship between France and England more close than they had ever been. No doubt such a step must have been painful to her, as to receive an upstart into a select caste, such as that of royalty, always is; but here again the Queen's true heart burst through all prejudices, and she formed for the Empress Eugénie, a lady with not the faintest claims to royal blood, a true affection, proved through many trials and a long course of years.

The faint reverberation of revolution which produced the Chartist movement of April, 1848, was remarkable enough in its way, rousing alarm, and calling forth preparations which are almost amusing to hear of now, in the long and settled calm and freedom from revolution which we have since enjoyed. "We had our Revolution yesterday, and it ended in smoke," Prince Albert wrote. But neither of the royal pair had any part to play in this short-lived alarm, of which a few jokes and amusing sketches in *Punch* are almost the only memorial. So completely calmed was the atmosphere that a visit to Ireland, which was always the portion of the kingdom most apt to be moved by revolutionaries, and which had just sustained the great convulsion of the famine, was undertaken in 1849, and secured a triumphantly cordial welcome for the Sovereign and her young children, freely trusted among them with a confidence which that imaginative and impulsive people fully appreciated. The Queen paid a second visit to Ireland in 1861, with equally satisfactory results. It cannot but be regretted that her Majesty did not make a home in some spot amid the beautiful scenery of that island, as she did in Scotland. She had already paid several visits to Scotland, and acquired there the little territory of Balmoral, an individual, not national, possession.

A more joyful and more agreeable event, though neither so interesting nor so important, was the Great Exhibition in 1851, the first of these interchanges of the best examples of production from every civilised nation which have since taken place all over the world, and we may perhaps say have been found somewhat wearisome in the end, though always relished by the general public, which has crowded each one in succession. The idea was Prince Albert's, and it was an extraordinary novelty when first propounded, exciting alarm as well as hope; for it was thought that foreign revolutionaries with pistol and dagger (bombs or Anarchists being scarcely as yet thought of) were more certain to make their appearance than manufactures or manufacturers. Her Majesty's interest in the Exhibition was intense. It was altogether the creation of her husband, and his was all the honour and glory. The building was erected in Hyde Park, a great and dazzling palace of glass, enclosing some of the finest trees to magnify its pageants, and moving everybody, or almost everybody, who beheld it to rapturous admiration. The Queen's own narrative of its opening, and of its history generally, is almost lyrical in its delight and triumph. "The proudest and happiest day of my happy life," she calls the opening day. "All owing to Albert—all to him!" It was full to her of "the glory of his dear name, united with the glory of my dear country." Every word her Majesty writes on this subject is aglow with sacred pride and generous joy. It was during this summer that, on returning from a ball at Guildhall in the small hours of the morning, the royal pair found the streets still full of people waiting for their return. "A million of people remained till three in the streets,"



THE QUEEN BIDDING FAREWELL TO HER GUARDS (p. 86).

the Prince writes, glad in his turn to celebrate the glory which he was well aware was his wife's and not his. "How few sovereigns have ever had such a true compliment paid to them!"

The Exhibition was supposed, with all its visitors from every quarter of the world, to be a pledge of universal peace. But the last relics of it had scarcely disappeared from the park when the trumpet of war was again sounding wildly through the earth, and the French and British were marching side by side to beard the lion in his den, to attack Russia in the centre of her military operations, the great fortress town and seaport of Sebastopol, where she held in awe the terrified capital of the Turks, that ancient seat of empire, Constantinople, which has so often been a bone of contention through the world. The Queen had but little to do with the war personally, except to send off her soldiers with an almost personal farewell, standing upon the balcony at Buckingham Palace while the Guards marched past, with all the emotion which characterises a family farewell. And when such as returned from that terrible conflict came back, she distributed with her own hands, as she has generally done since after any great military achievement, the decorations given for distinguished valour—especially the new honour, the Victoria Cross, than which no nobler decoration has ever rested on a hero's bosom. It was when the war was approaching its crisis that the Emperor Napoleon III. became the guest of England. The last royal visitors whom the Queen had received had been the Emperor of Russia and the King of France, as has been already noted. Had it been done on purpose by ordinance of Heaven, to exhibit to some wondering band of student-angels the curious changes and instability of human things, no more perfect contradiction of so recent a past could have been thought of. Old Louis Philippe was dead in exile; Nicholas was moodily dying in St. Petersburg of failure and defeat and a broken heart, when the man who had displaced the one and helped to crush the other appeared as Emperor of the French, our ally, our nearest neighbour, by courtesy the royal brother of our Queen, in the limited confraternity of monarchs, to receive at Windsor the honours that had been so lately paid to the others. Such a strange revolution of fortune has very seldom happened in this world. And the interest is enhanced when we remember what was the final fate of this extraordinary man, a fate compounded of all the griefs of his predecessors—defeat, shame, sorrow, loss, and exile. He had a splendid reception in England, where there had been many a severe comment on his grasp at power, and many a harsh criticism of his person: but where the supreme right of France to decide in her own case had been long and fully acknowledged.

Another great and terrible war, if war it could be called, followed very speedily upon that of the Crimea. It was, perhaps, the most horrible in

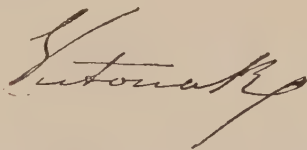
which the British nation had ever been engaged—a revolt against British rule, for which the great garrison of India was unprepared, and which was accompanied by atrocities which we had learned to regard as mere chimeras of the past. These atrocities, the most savage insults as well as the most abominable cruelty, moved the nation at home to one of those passionate outbursts of feeling which make a country think and act like an individual, and sweep away all the moderating influence of diversities of opinion; but except in the feeling, much stronger than that of any individual citizen, with which the Queen regarded every national calamity as personal to herself, the Mutiny did not call her Majesty into any special action.

We may add here a private incident which throws great light upon the Queen's own view of her rights and responsibilities in respect of the public business of the country. It took place during the sway of Lord Palmerston, a man of great and showy ability, who indeed, to do him justice, made British power respected all over the Continent, but impressed a fierce hostility to himself in so doing upon the nations whom he held in check. He was of that apparently careless, gay, and *insouciant* class, conducting all affairs with a high hand, with an appearance of perfect ease and indifference to what happens—or, rather, of happy conviction that nothing but what he desires can happen—which has always proved attractive to the English mind. It is evident that the Minister had not confined this high-handedness to his dealings with other nations, but conceived himself able to carry his Sovereign with

Windsor Castle,
December 6th 1854.

Would you tell Mr. Herbert that I begged she would let me see frequently the accounts she receives from Miss Nightingale or Mr. Bracebridge, as I hear no details of the wounded, tho' I see so many from officers etc about the battlefield; and naturally the former must interest me more than anyone.

Let Mr. Herbert also know that I wish Miss Nightingale and the ladies would tell these poor noble wounded and sick men that no one takes a warmer interest, or feels more for their sufferings, or admires their courage or heroism more than their Queen. Day and night she thinks of her beloved troops and so does the Prince. Beg Mr. Herbert to communicate these my words to those ladies as I know that our sympathy is much valued by these noble fellows.



LETTER FROM THE QUEEN EXPRESSING SYMPATHY WITH THE
CRIMEAN WOUNDED.

him in the same way. He ended by giving grave offence to her Majesty. As we have called attention to the Queen's strict observance of her constitutional position and absolute impartiality, both in respect of parties at home and complications abroad, it is necessary, to the full understanding of her character, to notice here that this came from no mere compliance of temper, but that when her own rights are assailed she knows how to defend them with spirit and dignity. After various attempts to set the matter right in a milder way, her Majesty was at last moved to recall Lord Palmerston personally and distinctly to a sense of what was due to her. The letter which she wrote on this subject has been spoken of in the *Life of Lord Palmerston* as "a paper written in anger by a lady as well as a Sovereign," a somewhat foolish distinction, though intended to cast contempt upon it as an effusion of feminine temper; but we think the impartial reader will feel it to be a very dignified statement of what her Majesty had a right to expect. The Queen writes as follows:—

"With reference to the conversation about Lord Palmerston which the Queen had with Lord John Russell the other day . . . she thinks it right, in order to prevent any mistake in the future, to explain what it is she expects from the Foreign Secretary.

"She requires:—

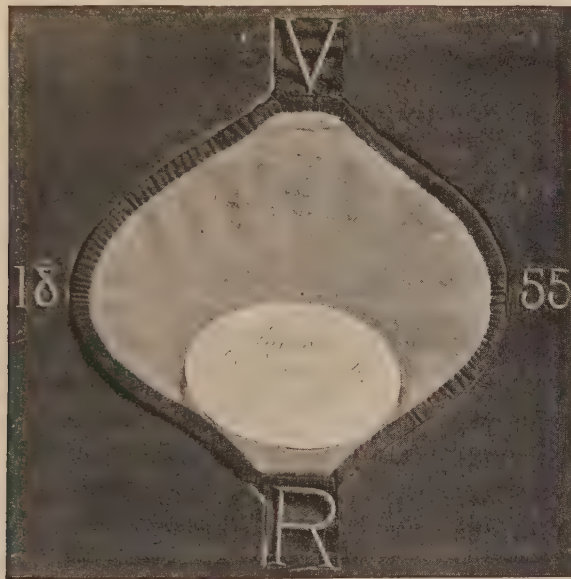
"1. That he will distinctly state what he proposes in a given case, in order that the Queen may know as distinctly to what she has given her royal sanction.

"2. Having once given her sanction to a measure, that it be not arbitrarily altered or modified by the Minister. Such an act she must consider to be a failure in sincerity towards the Crown. . . . She expects to be kept informed of what passes between him and the foreign Ministers before important decisions are taken, based upon that intercourse; to receive the foreign despatches in good time; and to have the drafts for her approval sent to her in sufficient time to make herself acquainted with their contents before they are sent off."

It cannot be supposed that this could be a very palatable document to an all-powerful Minister, used to wielding the power of the empire very much at his own discretion; but it is a vindication of the Queen's position as having really a part in great public affairs, instead of being merely a puppet of State, to sign and authorise matters which she knew nothing about. It is very necessary that this be kept in mind by all who desire to have a full understanding of her Majesty's character and place.

The Queen's comfort was seriously impaired, and a very unpleasant crisis brought about, by a sudden public panic in respect of the influence of the Prince Consort which became general before the period of the Crimean War. He was accused of being the enemy of liberty, a partisan of absolute Government, and of using his natural power with the Queen, and whatever influence he possessed in society, against all liberal movements. We have already remarked that the ruling principle of the Prince's character, his determined self-repression and abstinence from all personal display, kept him always, as at first, a veiled figure, without any of that frank self-revelation which was characteristic of the Queen. He did his duty in every way, but did not

attempt either to gain public applause or to complain when it was withheld; nevertheless, things went so far on this occasion that the cruel rumours were made the subject of a debate in Parliament, in which he was fully vindicated, and the noble and self-denying position which he had taken up from the very date of his marriage was explained and made clear by those who knew it best—the Ministers who had been acquainted with his politics in every detail. The time was coming when at last the country should awake mournfully to a sense of the injustice it had done and the little appreciation it had shown; but before we come to the sad event which wrecked the Queen's life, and put an end to her personal happiness, we may still linger a little upon the private incidents of that happy life before it came suddenly to its earthly close.



ARM-SLING MADE BY THE QUEEN FOR A WOUNDED SOLDIER,
BEARING INSCRIPTION "CRIMEA, 8TH SEPT., 1855.

(In the possession of Major-General J. R. Hume.)

CHAPTER V.

THE ROYAL FAMILY.

WE have as yet omitted all mention of the children who soon enlivened the stately life of the palaces in London and Windsor with the cheerful noises and many humours of the nursery. Every house which is so blessed has its own record of baby ways, and those wonderful sayings and doings which to every pair of parents give the impression of a new world just beginning, with latent genius in it enough to change the whole course of earthly affairs. From November, 1840, to the spring of 1857 these new arrivals went on, to the great satisfaction of the nation and the delight of all more immediately concerned; so that a family of nine sons and daughters, all healthy and lively children, grew up around the royal couple, the only delicate one in the family being Prince Leopold, the youngest of the boys, and the only one who caused any anxiety on this subject. It is needless to say that the anecdotes are beyond counting of such a numerous flock, from the moment when the little Princess Royal "looked about" at her christening, "quite conscious that all this stir was about herself," until the moment when the latest born, bearing in the family the name of Baby, is described as "prettier than babies usually are." The Queen had, therefore, in fulfilling this part of her duties, many enforced retirements from the public service, though she never relinquished, save for the smallest period possible, the necessary business of her high estate; in which her husband was always her right hand, helping her through the intervals of weakness, as well with those personal attentions which cheer a suffering wife more than any other alleviation, as in the work which had always to be attended to whatever happened. "No one but himself," the Queen tells us, "ever lifted her from her bed to the sofa," or wheeled that sofa into a brighter spot. He sat by her even in a darkened room, wrote for her, read to her. After the birth of her second child, the Prince of Wales, the Queen recorded in her Journal how on the birthday of the elder baby, the Princess Royal (there was not quite a year between the two!), "Albert brought in dearest little Pussy in such a smart white merino dress, trimmed with blue, which Mama had given her, and placed her on my bed, seating himself next to her. And as my precious invaluable Albert sat there, and

our little love between us, I felt quite moved with happiness and gratitude to God." The extreme and tender simplicity of these records gives them always an attraction. "To-day is very bright, clear, and dry," she writes a little later, when emancipated from the sick room, "and we walked out early and felt like prisoners freed from some dungeon." The young mother adds a fervent prayer that her little boy may resemble his father in "*every, every* respect, both in body and mind." The first part of this prayer was certainly not granted, the prevailing lineaments of the house of Brunswick holding their place in the new royal family, as they had done for so many generations. There is a pleasant touch of Prince Albert's universal management in the report of the ceremony of the infant Prince's christening, which took place in St. George's Chapel on the 25th of January, 1842. It was suggested by the musical authorities there that the service should terminate with an anthem, to which the Prince objected. "No anthem," he said. "If the service ends by an anthem, we shall go out criticising the music. We will have something we all know: something in which we can join; something devotional, the Hallelujah Chorus; we shall all join in that with our hearts."

It was during one of the Queen's experiences of this description that an anxious canon asked the Prince whether special prayers should not be offered in the course of the service for her Majesty? "You already pray for the Queen five times in every service," answered the Prince, with severe common-sense, and perhaps an inclination to repress over-much display of loyal devotion. As a matter of fact, the service used in St. George's Chapel is very exuberant in this respect, adding to the usual supplications of the Morning Prayer, Litany, and Communion Service a special prayer for the Queen as the head of "that Most Noble Order of the Garter," whose special chapel it is.

The Queen's children were named in many cases by simple English names, instead of the more distinctive royal ones (Augustus, Adolphus, etc.) which had been habitual. The Princess Royal perpetuated the name of her mother and grandmother, as was becoming and natural; the Prince of Wales those of his father and grandfather. The second Princess was Alice, the second Prince Alfred; both English. The third son and the sixth child was Arthur, so named in compliment to the Duke of Wellington, upon whose birthday the child was born, and for whom the Queen had always entertained a warm admiration. The others, Helena, Louise, Leopold, Beatrice, were all named after relatives according to an excellent custom, so much more human and kindly than the foolish craze for unusual and often quite unmeaning names which is so common nowadays. The Prince Consort gives a pretty description of the coming of one of these babies.

"This morning, after rather a restless night (being Walpurgis night that was quite appropriate, while the witches were careering on the Blocksberg under Ernest Augustus's mild sceptre), a little boy glided into the light of day, and has been received by the sisters with wild *jubilates*. 'Now we are seven, just as many as the days of the week,' was

the cry ; and then a bit of a struggle arose as to who was to be Sunday. Out of well-bred courtesy, that honour was awarded to the newcomer."

The education of their children was a subject of the greatest anxiety and solicitude to the parents. The Prince Consort is said to have been a strict disciplinarian, which, considering the severity of his own education, need scarcely be wondered at. To repress in his children in their early days every piece of arrogance or presumption to which their exalted rank might give rise seems to have been a constant care. "No; I won't learn my lesson," the little Albert Edward is reported to have said, putting his little fist through a pane of the window to emphasise his refusal. "I won't stand in the corner; I am the Prince of Wales!" The delusion involved in this statement was promptly dissipated, we are told, by a whipping, administered unflinchingly by his father. On another occasion the little boy had an encounter on the seashore with a fisher boy, whose basket he upset, and who gave the Prince a licking after the frank and free manner of his kind. The astonishment of both children was great when the parents of the Prince approved the fisher, and insisted on an apology on the part of the royal child—a practical instance of moral equality which no doubt told better than any sermon. "It is true," the Prince Consort is reported to have said, "that you are the Prince of Wales, and if you conduct yourself properly you may become a man of high station, and even, after the death of your mother, King of England. But now you are a little boy who must obey his tutors and governors."

The Princess Royal, who seems to have been a little *espiègle*, very like her mother in similar circumstances, affords a still larger number of anecdotes. She resented being called "Missy" with much indignation—and indeed it is not a pretty title—"I'm not Missy—I am the Princess Royal," the little lady would exclaim. When the family were at Windsor they were attended by a well-known and respected doctor of the place, Mr. Brown, whom, hearing their father address him as Brown *tout court*, the Princesses considered themselves at liberty to address with the same familiarity. The Queen corrected them, and all addressed the physician as "Mr. Brown," excepting the Princess Royal, who persisted in her right to use the name as her father did. One day the Queen heard her, and informed her that if she again addressed Mr. Brown in that manner she should be sent to bed. The next morning, when he presented himself in the royal apartments where the family were assembled, the young Princess, looking straight at him, said: "Good-morning, Brown!" Then, seeing her mother's eyes fixed upon her, she rose, and, with a curtsy, continued: "And good-night, Brown; for I am going to bed." And she walked resolutely away to her punishment.

Another pleasant story tells how one of the royal yachtsmen carried the little Princess on board the yacht, with a friendly "There you are, my little lady!" as he set her down. The child, angry at being carried,



THE FOUR PRINCESSES.

PRINCESS ROYAL; PRINCESS ALICE; PRINCESS LOUISE; PRINCESS HELENA.
(From the painting by F. Winterhalter.)

exclaimed, "I am a Princess; I am not a little lady," which the Queen overheard. "You had better," said her Majesty, "tell the kind sailor who carried you that you are not a little lady yet, though you hope to be one some day." It is to be hoped that the delicate sarcasm told.

Her Majesty's own theories as to this most important matter were simple and true to the chief point, like all her philosophy. "The greatest motive of all," she wrote in a letter to one of the children's instructors, "is that the children should be brought up as simply and in as domestic a way as possible; that (not interfering with their lessons) they should be as much as possible with their parents, and learn to place their greatest confidence in them in all things." "It is already a hard case for me," the Queen adds, when speaking of the pressure of public business, which prevented her from giving to the Princess Royal all the attention she wished, "that my occupations prevent me from being with her when she says her prayers"; and we may quote entire the note of instruction in respect of religious training which the young mother of twenty-five put down for the guidance of her deputies in this important work:

"I am quite clear that she should be taught to have great reverence for God and for religion, but that she should have the feeling of devotion and love which our Heavenly Father encourages His earthly children to have for Him, and not one of fear and trembling; and that the thoughts of death and an after life should not be presented in an alarming and forbidding view; and that she should be made to know *as yet* no difference of creeds."

Those wise and simple instructions might be adopted with advantage in many nurseries less than royal. As a lighter detail, we may add the description given by the Welsh nurse of one of the Princes, quoted by Madame Bunsen, who (with a half grudge, perhaps, that she had not something more splendid to tell of) informed the amused Ambassadors that the royal children "were kept very plain indeed. It was quite poor living; only a bit of roast meat and, perhaps, a plain pudding." The same authority, probably quite unconscious of the high compliment she was paying, pronounced her Majesty to be "quite fit to have been a poor man's wife as well as a Queen."

In the year 1845, the Queen and her husband, longing, even amid all the splendour of Windsor, to have something which should not be a great ancestral palace but a home of their own, their own personal property, to be arranged and decorated in their own way—fixed upon Osborne in the Isle of Wight, a small estate which happened to be in the market. They wanted a seaside retirement where there would be bathing, gardening, the delights of rural and of private life without any interruptions from outside. The house on the property was small, but another was built suitable to the needs of the royal family. "It sounds so pleasant to have a place of one's own, quiet and retired, and free from all Woods and Forests, and other charming departments, which really are the plague of one's life," said

the Queen. The situation of Osborne, with its broad sea views, the great ships in the roadstead, and the stir of naval activity within sight, yet sheltered by its own woods going down to the edge of the water and enclosing a long stretch of sea beach, where the children could bathe undisturbed, was delightful to the royal party, and still more delightful from the reflection that it was their own private property. The Prince directed everything, the building, the laying out of the garden—all the arrangements of the little seaside paradise. Lady Lyttelton describes how the household took possession of the new dwelling with great spirit. "Everything in the house is quite new, and the drawing-room looked very handsome. The windows, lighted by the brilliant lamps, must have been seen far out at sea. After dinner we were to drink the Queen's and the Prince's health as a housewarming. And after it the Prince said very naturally and simply, but seriously: 'We have a hymn' (he called it a psalm) 'in Germany for such occasions. It begins——' And then he repeated two lines in German which I could not quote right, meaning a prayer to bless our 'coming in and going out.'" The household would doubtless have been much surprised and somewhat scandalised if it had been asked to sing the hymn, but no doubt the serious master of the house did so in his heart. "One of the maids of honour insisted on throwing an old shoe after the Queen as she entered for the first night, being a Scotch superstition," adds the Court lady; so that both religion and witchcraft were invoked to protect the new home.

A few years afterwards the royal pair, having now repeatedly visited and conceived a hearty liking for Scotland, found another private and personal home there. The estate of Balmoral was bought from the Earl of Fife in 1852, and here once more they found themselves in their own house. Her Majesty describes its appearance and surroundings in her *Journal*:—

"We arrived at Balmoral. It is a pretty little castle in the old Scotch style. There is a picturesque tower and a garden in front, with a high, wooded hill; at the back there is a road down to the Dee, and the hills rise all around. To the left you look towards the beautiful hills surrounding Lochnagar, and to the right, towards Ballater, to the glen along which the Dee winds. It was so calm and so solitary it did one good as one gazed around; and the pure mountain air was most refreshing. All seemed to breathe freedom and peace."

Between these two unpretending abodes, the seaside villa at Osborne and the little Highland castle at Balmoral (both rebuilt and enlarged), a great portion of the life of the family was passed. They became the delightful playthings of royal leisure, the beloved retreats from business and gaiety and care. The Prince had almost a passion for landscape gardening, and great skill and taste in that magnificent yet simple art. The prettiest allusions to the "island home where the royal household was 'wholly given up to the

enjoyment of the warm summer weather,—the children catching butterflies, and Victoria sitting under the trees”—abound; and all the improvements made at Balmoral are chronicled by the Queen with the warmest cordial pleasure. In later years those two private dwellings, which she speaks of even in his lifetime with such special affection as “entirely the creation” of her husband, have been to the Queen more dear than any other habitations, so that there has been a half grudge at times in the popular mind—one of the grudges and vexations of affection—that the chief home of English royalty, the cradle of kings, has fallen into less importance than ought to belong to Royal Windsor, the most stately and most historic of English houses. Windsor, however, was not neglected. It had still its share as the busy year went round, and each season had its appropriate scene and setting, sometimes on that royal height which has all the effect of a great elevation as it looks over the broad valley at its feet, sometimes upon the edge of the sea “where the stately ships go down,” sometimes within the circling group of mountains which protected the little castle in the north. In those days, too, the London season always brought the royal family to town, to take their place at the head of Society, as was fit. Whether Society, that strange agglomeration of good and evil, was really and permanently the better for the high example set to it, it would be impossible to assert; but in the meantime it was at least more decorous, and virtue was respected as it seldom is among the frivolities of fashion; the theatres, which the Queen much patronised, both she and her husband being “fond of the play,” were purified of conspicuous vice, and the manners of the country certainly improved. There was no romping or horseplay among the visitors in great houses such as we now hear of, and we cannot but think less of the vacancy of mind which make these noisy amusements agreeable. The “pace” was not so fast, life was not a continuous whirl of sports and games; there were intervals for thought and human intercourse of a natural and simple kind. We almost believe that there was less running after whatever was the fashion in things serious as in things gay, and that a smaller portion of the world took their opinions and pursued their pleasures at the word of that irresponsible dictator; but it is hard to take the position of judge in this respect, as if everything was well in those past days, and only now something “rotten in the state of Denmark”; nevertheless, the influence of the Queen and Prince was evidently beneficial, and secured a higher degree at least of self-control and regard for appearances in the highest circles of the land. The reader may say that a regard for appearances is a poor safeguard of virtue, which is quite true; and yet it is a barrier against the decline of noble manners and of many decencies of public behaviour, such as are certainly less regarded now.

The Queen and the Prince were also lovers of art, though we are not aware that the art of the moment, which perhaps was not of a very high



ROYAL GROUP, WINDSOR, 1843.
(From a painting by Sir Edwin Landseer, R.A.)

class, was specially patronised by them. It used to be said that painters were a little afraid of a call to Windsor, not finding it possible to insist on prices with their Sovereign, and finding the ideas of the Prince less large on that point than their own; but that may have been whispered among less eminent painters, who had no hope of a call to Windsor, to console them for the absence of royal patronage. But of another art, of Music, the royal pair were always enthusiastic patrons. We have little doubt that the great advance in the appreciation of good music, which has taken place in this age, is largely due to the Queen's great love and understanding of the art. In the early days of her Majesty's married life, one of the Queen's ladies, Lady Blomfield, found it "immensely improving" to join in her Majesty's little private impromptu concerts, when such of the several ladies and gentlemen as could play or sing were expected to read and perform the most difficult music at sight. "We sang again last night," this lady says, "and after Costa went away I sorted a quantity of music for the Queen; and then Prince Albert said he had composed a German ballad, which he thought would suit my voice, and he wished me to sing it. So his Royal Highness accompanied me, and I sang it at sight, which rather alarmed me; but I got through it, and it is very pretty. The Prince of Wales stayed some time in the room while we were practising. He was very attentive, and both he and the Princess seem to have a decided taste for music. We sang some of Mozart's Masses, and you cannot think how beautiful they are with all the parts filled up."

Some anecdotes of Jenny Lind, when she first came to England and was honoured with royal invitations, form an amusing illustration of the Queen's love for music and musicians—if true. For the authenticity of the following anecdote we do not like to answer, but the action on the part of the impetuous and simple-minded singer is very natural at least. She had been asked to assist at a concert in Buckingham Palace, but her engagement with Mr. Lawley prohibited her from singing anywhere except at the Italian Opera House, and hence her reply to the Queen could not be anything but a refusal. When she had sent it she was herself terrified at what she had done, and resolved that there was nothing for it but to *call on the Queen*, and express her annoyance and mortification in being obliged to send such an answer. Accordingly she set out in a glow of remorseful feeling to Buckingham Palace. Arrived there, it may be supposed what an excitement was produced by the sudden appearance of this foreign lady in her carriage, demanding to be introduced into the presence of Majesty. Officials small and great were called, to ponder this question without precedent. She was refused, but would take no refusal at first; then higher functionaries came to persuade her to go away, and convince her that her demand was out of the question. But the singer would hear nothing, and insisted that her card should be taken to the Queen. To bring her name under the Queen's notice was, of

course, the only hope. Finally this difficult matter was by unceasing perseverance accomplished. When the Queen knew who it was who so persistently besieged her gates, she gave orders that Miss Lind should be admitted. Without any sense of the extraordinary privilege thus accorded to her, the singer, "in the most natural way in the world," made her explanation and expressed her regret. It is, we believe, a fact that her Majesty loves a frank and natural accost, and she was delighted by the bravery, as well as the great talent of this new wonder, and much amused by the "call" thus paid to her. The following incident is, we believe, quite authentic:—

"When Jenny Lind first sang in private before the Queen, she was accompanied by the Queen's pianist, who, being connected with a rival theatre, played some tricks which annoyed Jenny exceedingly. This the quick ear of her Majesty, who is an excellent musician, at once detected; and as Jenny stood up for a second song she motioned the pianist aside, saying quietly, 'I will accompany Miss Lind myself,' which she did to perfection."

We are not aware that her Majesty ever accorded to literature the same acknowledgment which the other arts received from her. No literary person, unless distinguished otherwise, ever, so far as we know, entered the charmed circle with that claim alone. Once, and only once, in her reign a great poet received such a distinction as transcended the lesser honours so liberally bestowed in other quarters; but Tennyson's peerage was given in the Queen's later years, and was rather a token of friendship from an eminent statesman than a personal compliment from the Queen. This was somewhat curious, seeing that the most strenuous German etiquette yields to afford *les entrées* to distinguished writers, even when without any extraneous claim. The Queen, however, in later days invited various persons in the higher ranks of literature to "call upon her" as Jenny Lind had done, or a meeting was planned in some worthy house at which the Queen visited. In this way her Majesty saw Thomas Carlyle, to his own considerable surprise, though we do not think the meeting made any particular impression on either party. In her Majesty's early youth she had received Southey through the Duchess of Northumberland, then her governess, and, we are told, talked to him eagerly, telling him how many of his books she had read, and especially that the "Life of Nelson" was a great favourite with her, and she had read it again and again; a speech which, from the lips of the young Princess Victoria, no doubt pleased the poet much. But in general the professors of literature were left outside, and received little notice.

During these busy and happy years the children grew up and flourished, having their share of gaiety and gladness; and it was just after the last infant of the family, Princess Beatrice, had been born that the first great event of another description occurred. The Princess Royal was but seventeen, a shy and modest little girl, with many accomplishments which she was very loth to exhibit, and a considerable resemblance to her royal

mother. The family in their autumn holiday at Balmoral had received a visit from a promising young man, the son of the King of Prussia, not so great a sovereign as his grandson now is, nor as he himself became at the end of his life, but yet already one of the great powers of Europe. We learned to know this noble prince in other scenes, both splendid and sad; but in the autumn of 1855 he was young and setting out upon life. The Queen herself tells the story of this most suitable and satisfactory union.



FONT IN WHICH ALL THE ROYAL CHILDREN
HAVE BEEN BAPTISED.

"Our dear Victoria was this day [29th September, 1855] engaged to Prince Frederick William of Prussia, who had been on a visit to us since the 14th. He had already spoken to us on the 20th of his wishes, but we were uncertain, on account of her extreme youth, whether he should speak to her himself, or wait till he came back again. However, we felt that it was better he should do so; and during our ride up Craig-na-ban this afternoon he picked a piece of white heather (the emblem of good luck), which he gave to her, and this enabled him to make an allusion to his hopes and wishes, which led to this happy conclusion."

The marriage took place in the autumn of 1856, in the beautiful Chapel of St. George at Windsor, the Chapel of the Garter, and, next to Westminster, the most royal and the stateliest of all English sacred places. It has seen many other marriages and splendid ceremonials in Queen Victoria's family circle, but never any so entirely happy, with a splendour fully justified by unbroken prosperity and family joy, as this. Father and mother and children, and the mother's mother, who was receiving her reward for all the self-denials of her early life in the unbroken domestic happiness of the expanded circle, now stood round the first bride of the family, who recalled the first Victoria and her marriage day to all England, with a happy sentiment which endeared both the mother and the child. It was such a family as might still have flourished unbroken for long years, for the royal parents were still young, in the full bloom and vigour of life, and there had as yet appeared among them no warning cloud, no shadow to bring dismay.

When the Princess went away, some time later, on a wintry day through the falling snow, pale with the first sorrow of parting, that happy grief was the worst family trouble which the peaceful home had ever known; and all

England entered into it with that tender sympathy which exists among those who have accompanied each other through all the details of family life, and who knew the ages of the children of their royal neighbour, calculating by those of their own boys and girls, the contemporaries of Prince and Princess—a wonderful and subtle bond of friendship. Even now, when these children have grown to middle age, this strong family feeling returns to the general heart with every new event which turns either to joy or sorrow the household of the Queen.

With this marriage a new era in that family life began. It is good when the boys and girls grow up and spread their new life over the world, carrying love and tender thoughts with them wherever they go; but the first dispersion is not without its pains as well as pleasures. A few years after the young Princess went forth to her new country, the Prince of Wales began his work as an apprentice to that hard trade of royalty, at which he has laboured in its secondary offices so steadily ever since. "The time had now come," we are told, "to arrange for the fulfilment of a promise which had been made by the Queen to the Canadians, that the Prince of Wales should pay a visit to their country." The promise had been given during the Crimean War (for which Canada had levied a regiment of infantry) in answer to a request that the Queen would visit her American possessions. The Canadian deputation by whom this request was conveyed were officially told that it would be undesirable to expose the Sovereign to the risks of the voyage and the fatigues attending such a visit. The Canadians then asked that the Queen should give them one of her sons as Governor-General. Their youth made this impossible, but an assurance was



THE PRINCE OF WALES, AGED 7.

(From the picture by Winterhalter.)

given that as soon as the Prince of Wales was old enough he should visit Canada. This promise was fulfilled in 1860, when he was nineteen. About the same time Prince Alfred, the sailor boy of the family, joined his ship and set out for the Cape. "It will be a strange and noteworthy circum-

stance," writes Prince Albert, "that almost in the same week in which the elder brother is to open the great bridge across the St. Lawrence in Canada, the younger will lay the foundation stone of the breakwater for the harbour of Capetown, at the other end of the world. What a charming picture is here of the progress and expansion of the British race, and of the useful co-operation of the royal family in the civilisation which England has developed and advanced! In both these colonies our children are looked for with great affection and conscious national pride."

Thus the two lads were sent forth to begin their career, the mother quaking, who can doubt, at every breeze that blew while both her boys were on the sea, but taking no advantage of her royal exemption from all prick of necessity to keep them at home and near her; on the contrary, sending them to their future occupations all the more early and all the more inevitably because they were princes and bound to be the first in the service of their country. The reader knows how many journeys and wearisome pageants, what crowds of ceremonial performances—opening of bridges, laying of foundation stones, every kind of tedious office—have been provided by British loyalty since, and how honestly and cheerfully the Prince of Wales and his brothers have worked through them all. These first essays in their career were very successful. The Princes were received with universal love and sympathy, and the pleasantest accounts of their good looks and manners and youthful discretion reached their parents. The Queen's thanks to the President of the United States for those most delightful of all applauses, the praises bestowed on her son, are evidently spoken with a swelling heart, and it is easy to understand with what interest all the newspapers, full of the details of the young Princes' expeditions, were pored over and sacredly laid up—every scrap of them. "Four of you absent," writes Prince Albert on a birthday, "Bertie, Alfie, Baby, and you—but all well employed and doing well, and for a father's heart that is the chief concern." "He is very clever, and infinitely busy and active," he says of Prince Alfred in another place.

It would be impossible to say which of the young travellers was followed most fully by their parents at home, as well as by the interest of the whole country, to which in a measure it was its own sons and daughters who were thus going forth upon the world. Perhaps it is on the whole the married daughter, in whose case there are so many developments to be looked for, and of whom it is natural that she should "bring her babe, and make her boast," who attracts at first the most pleased yet anxious interest. There are some pleasant glimpses of the Princess Royal, who has borne so many other titles: Crown Princess of Prussia, Princess Imperial, Empress, and now, after a mournful crisis, into which her mother's people entered with a profound and tender sympathy seldom accorded even in private life to the sufferings of a son-in-law, an imperial

widow, proudly taking back her husband's name—the sole instance, so far as we know, of such a proceeding in the royal caste. Of these glimpses none is more pleasant or more characteristic than the following. While the sons were still absent, the royal family had planned another visit to Coburg, an expedition always delightful to them, to visit the Prince's old home, and to meet at that easy distance their eldest child, now absorbed in the care and tendance of the second generation. Her



THE PRINCE OF WALES IN CANADA: OPENING THE BRIDGE OVER THE ST. LAWRENCE RIVER.

father's kind letter is like a little picture of the young mother, still to her parents a child.

"You must bring the hopeful Wilhelm with you," the Prince Consort writes, "and not hide him away with a blush as you used to hide your drawings in the portfolio—'Don't look at that, papa! it is so bad you must not see it'; and then forth came into view something full of beauty and talent."

In the absence of her elder sister, the Princess Alice was now the first daughter at home, coming into the chief place and specially devoted to all a daughter's duties, as she continued to be to all the succeeding duties of

family life. "A graceful young woman," is her father's description of her at this early moment, "less beautiful, we think, than her sisters, but full of a pensive thoughtfulness and sweetness." For her, too, there early came a visitor watched with some solicitude by the parents, as evidently attracted by and securing the attention of the Princess. The young suitor was all that could be desired—a genial and charming young man, and thoroughly "in love," which was to the Queen always the most seductive quality of all; and by-and-by there occurred another pretty scene.

"After dinner, while talking to the gentlemen" [it is the Queen who speaks] "I perceived Alice and Louis talking before the fireplace more earnestly than usual, and when I passed to go to the other room both came up to me, and Alice, in much agitation, said that he had proposed to her, and he begged for my blessing. Louis has a warm, noble heart. We embraced our dear Alice, and *praised her much* to him."

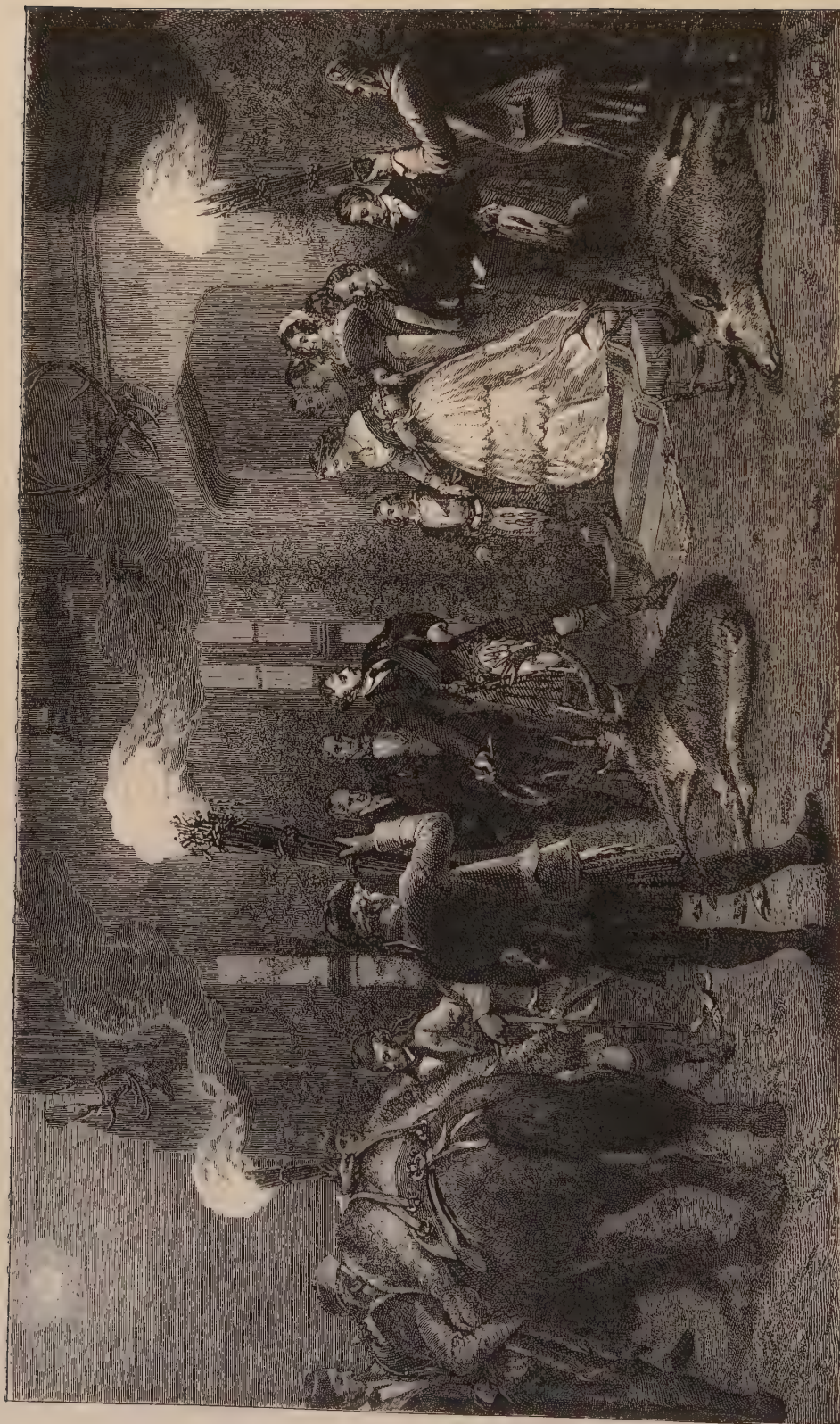
This is one of the simple touches, straight from the heart, which make all the Queen's notes so vivid, and sets the scene before us full of natural emotion. Thus the children were taking wing, fluttering outward with young pinions ready for flight over land and seas. Happy those to whom this occurs while there are still younger ones at home to keep life in the house. The atmosphere was but the more bright with so many new interests throughout the world, and the stronghold of love at home still unbroken, the parents being still young themselves, and the last of their flock not much more than a baby, keeping them all amused with her baby wit and wisdom.

But trouble, which had kept so long away, was now near at hand. We have always recollected through many years the wondering chill brought to a child's mind by the concluding sentences of a story popular in our youth, which ended with the conventional happy marriage and satisfaction of all concerned. "But," said the writer, too wise for her audience, "we will not turn another page lest there should be trouble to tell of." So, could we stop here, there would be no trouble to tell of concerning our Queen. A childhood subdued, but bearing all the traces of childish liveliness and pleasure in life; a youth impetuous, frank, and faulty, but with scarcely anything in it which does not attract the reader almost more than perfection; a most happy marriage and married life, the complete sympathy and constant help and company of the husband whom she loved, a band of delightfully natural children, with every opportunity of indulging and cultivating all the most delightful tastes of life, and making everybody round her (so far, at least, as is given to mortal effort) happy in her happiness—what more could have been asked for the ideal princess, the Queen of Dreams? Public agitation arose from time to time to break the calm. Wars broke out, but were brought to a happy and victorious close. Changes in law and custom, from which melancholy minds predicted all kinds of evil, occurred, and were assimilated and nothing but good came, or appeared to come, of them. The

record of happiness was unbroken. No one died, no one fell who was specially dear to this happy, heaven-protected pair. Other crowns and other thrones came to the dust, but every day that passed made their throne more steadfast. They seemed lifted up above the troubles of humanity. Not even a serious illness disturbed the joyous calm. All was well, emphatically, in their universe, peace in the fields and in the cities, abroad and at home. The wave of mutiny had swept over India, but had been exhausted, and there, too, quiet reigned. That great alteration in the circumstances of commerce and industry—the adoption of Free Trade—had brought, or appeared to bring, nothing but good. Nothing but good was to be seen wherever the eye turned. The head of the country was perhaps a little turned with this invariable career of success, and though there is no reason to suppose that the head of the Queen was turned, she was now standing at the height of womanhood, the prime of life, without a tear to dim the prospect or a fear to make the future alarming. The present writer saw her Majesty for the first time in one of those earlier years, and though it was but for a moment, carried long in her mind the look of those well-opened, calm blue eyes, which seemed to a visionary girl the most royal thing she had ever seen, so perfect in queenly composure and possession of all they looked upon, the shining country, the glorious day, the universal sympathy and affection of all the crowds that surged about her. She seemed to have no fear, no doubt, no pride, no excitement or exaltation. She was the Queen, loyal herself to crown and people, as they to her, never undervaluing her office, which was natural to her as the air she breathed, never shaming it by arrogance or pride. The looker-on, being, as we have said, young and of an imaginative turn, derived an impression which she never forgot from this calm, royal outlook upon the world. Since then she has seen those eyes dim with sympathy and warm with kindness, but never lost the first effect, to her impersonal, as to any atom in the crowd.

Such was the tale of forty years of happy life. “To-day our marriage comes of age according to law,” the Prince Consort writes. “We have faithfully kept our pledge for better and for worse, and have only to thank God that He has vouchsafed so much happiness to us. May He have us in His keeping for the days to come! You have, I trust, found good and loving children in us, and we have experienced nothing but love and kindness from you.”

This was written to the Duchess of Kent, the good and wise mother with whom their history began. Alas! for those days to come. This was on the 10th of February, 1861. In the middle of March the first cloud that overshadowed the Queen’s life appeared, drifting suddenly upwards and covering the sky with gloom. She had been so happy! and in all her letters, in everything she says, this blessedness pours forth. She talks of “Our blessed marriage—a day which has brought us such incalculable



EVENING AT BALMORAL.

(From the picture by Carl Haag, R.W.S., in the Royal Collection.)

blessings!" little thinking, alas! poor lady, that this anniversary was the last. "Very few can say with me," she cries in an outbreak of thankful pride and joy, "that their husband at the end of twenty-one years is not only full of the friendship, kindness, and affection which a truly happy marriage brings with it, but of the same tender love as in the very first days of our marriage."

In another month this happy wife and her husband were in dutiful and sad attendance at the mother's death-bed. The Queen had never known what grief was before. She was taken in the full tide of her prosperous life, unprepared for sorrow. "Oh! what agony, what despair is this!" she cries, when some attendant, thinking to comfort her, prophesies for her mother "a gentle ending." "I was left alone gazing on that beloved form," she writes a little farther on; "and feeling as if my heart would break." She adds afterwards, with the simplicity of an emotion so deep yet so natural, "The constant crying was a relief. But oh! the sickness at heart—the thought of the daily, hourly blank—never a day passed that I did not get letters from or about her several times in the day." "The mother whom I so tenderly loved, from whom for these forty-one years I had never been parted, except for a few weeks," the Queen adds: and her Journal is full of the most touching descriptions, such as we all could parallel, of the forsaken rooms—everything the same, except that the one presence which gave all a meaning is gone for ever. This inevitable grief, however, which comes in the course of nature, and which even those most deeply bereaved must acquiesce in as such, became less severe in the course of the soothing months, and the Queen recovered her courage and strength in the quiet of her Highland glen, where she went some time afterwards with still all the most intimate consolations of life around her—the love of husband and children. Husband and wife were both aged forty-one, in the highest tide and most enjoyable period of mature yet still almost youthful life.



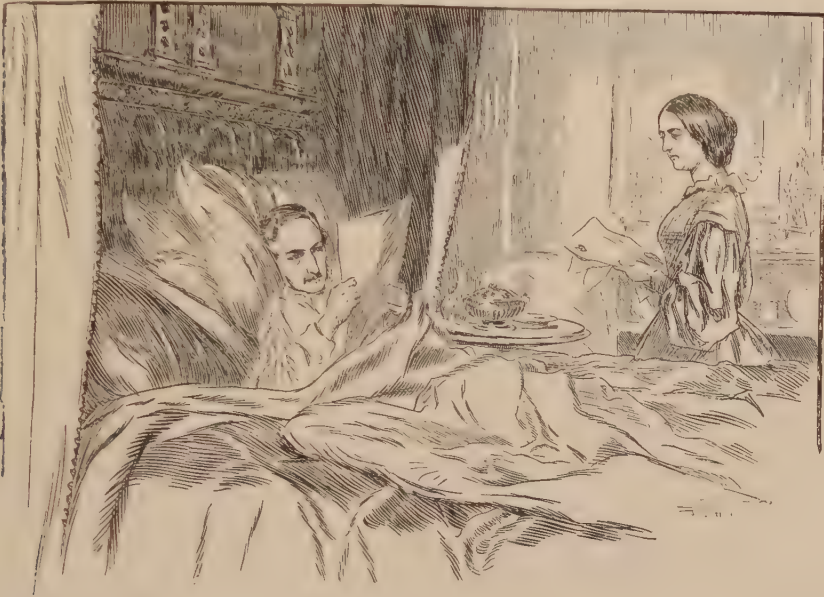
THE DUCHESS OF KENT.

CHAPTER VI.

WIDOWHOOD.

THE Queen returned to Windsor from Scotland in the end of October, 1861, and her first visits to Frogmore, and all the scenes made sacred by the many years of her mother's residence there, recalled her sorrow keenly on her first arrival, a feeling strongly shared by the Prince. Melancholy news from abroad reached them to add to the heaviness of the waning season. The royal house of Portugal, in which another Prince of Saxe-Coburg, the Prince Consort's cousin, had filled a position like his own as consort to Queen Maria da Gloria, had just sustained such an overwhelming succession of calamities as seldom falls upon any house. Typhoid fever broke out in the family, and in a few weeks the young King (who had lost his young wife a year or two before of the same disorder) and two of his brothers died. These sad events, it is evident, made the deepest impression upon Prince Albert. The letters of both the Queen and the Prince are full of them, and they seem to have given a kind of chill and shock to his very existence. It has been often said, though we do not know with what truth, that the House of Coburg was constitutionally subject to attacks of this malady, and that fever of any kind was specially dangerous to its members. Rightly or wrongly, if such an impression becomes current in a family it must be injurious, and perhaps the autumn damps and fallen leaves, and the heaviness of the November weather, along with this haunting superstition, may have worked upon the Prince's mind, besides the natural shock of such a calamity among his kinsfolk and the almost too poignant sympathy felt for the bereaved father thus deprived of almost his entire family at one stroke. He became "low and sad," unable to get over this mournful impression; and her Majesty took fright, and anxiously begged those around as much as possible to save him from the multitudinous exertions which were expected from him. The Prince's courage and heart seem, indeed, to have failed him all at once. He had suddenly grown weary in the middle of his days; not that he intermitted any of his duties, or withdrew from anything which had a claim on his attention; but he was tired, though it was still noonday and life seemed yet to stretch far before him. "He had

no wish to die," his biographer tells us, "but he did not care for living." Not long before his fatal illness, in speaking to the Queen, he said, "I do not cling to life; you do. But I set no store by it. If I knew that those I love were cared for, I should be quite ready to die to-morrow." In the same conversation he added, "I am sure, if I had a severe illness, I should give up at once; I should not struggle for life."



THE PRINCE CONSORT REVISING THE DESPATCH TO THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT.

Ominous and prophetic words! for the will to live is often half the battle. Prince Albert had gone into harness at twenty; he had never relaxed in his labours for all these twenty-one years—a crowned head has no holiday—and his was almost more than the labour which falls upon a crowned head. He had never rested nor thought of rest. Telegrams and despatches had followed him wherever he went, even when he was not absolutely at work. And now the inevitable reaction had come. He was weary in the middle of the way.

From this time forward he was never well. "Am very wretched"; "Thoroughly unwell"; "Have scarcely closed my eyes at night for the last fortnight"; were the records that were found afterwards in his diary. But, weary as he was, he kept on, with that sense of duty which never deserted him. At last it almost seems as if he moved half mechanically, languor growing upon him in the laborious routine from which there was no escape.

It was in this memorable year that the great American War broke out;

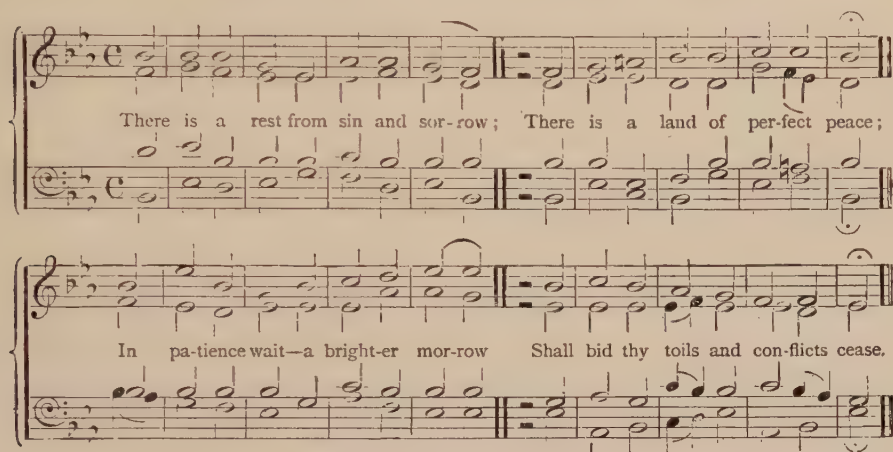
and there came a moment in which it seemed that England was likely, without any will or wish of hers, to be made a party to the quarrel. An English mail steamer from Havannah on its homeward passage was boarded by an American man-of-war, and two passengers in it, commissioners from the Southern States, were forcibly taken from under the protection of our flag. As soon as this was known the country blazed into sudden excitement, a Cabinet Council was instantly called together, and a memorandum prepared instructing the British Ambassador in America to demand a disavowal of the act on the part of the American Government and restoration of the prisoners. The memorandum was submitted, as all such despatches are, to the Queen. Prince Albert was roused from his languid state by this sudden alarm, nothing less important having succeeded in doing so; and with his clear and calm intellect he soon perceived how important it was that a document involving so many hazards to two great countries so closely allied by nature, should be as moderate in tone as was consistent with the dignity of the nation. The royal pair, both by this time so experienced in all Imperial business, held their own private consultation over this important State paper, and the result was a note conveying the suggestion to Ministers that the despatch should be softened in tone, that the British Government should express their unwillingness to believe that the American Government could have intended any such insult to the British flag, and their hope that reparation would be spontaneously offered—a suggestion which instantly commended itself to the statesmen concerned, and, being adopted, was probably the cause of the peaceful solution of the difficulty.

A fac-simile of this note is given in the last volume of the “Life of the Prince Consort.” It is in his handwriting, as it was his composition; but here and there are interlineations in the Queen’s hand, perhaps only to correct the occasional slip in English into which the Prince still fell at times, perhaps to amend a phrase; in any case, they stand together in touching evidence of that perfect union which was so soon to close—a union of mind and thought and high deliberation, as well as of the closest affection. This little touching circumstance gives the clearest example of the manner in which her Majesty’s part of the Imperial work is done. To soothe, to modify, and, without compromising any right, to leave a place for unforced amendment, is a most royal mode of aiding in the work of the State. Her Majesty is anxious to tell the whole world that this wisdom was not hers but his whom she mourns. But her writing, mingled with that of the Prince, reveals to us the intimate consultation, the serious thought together, the double action of two minds which were one, such as we might seek in vain through long epochs of history. Probably the public would never have heard of it at all save for the calamity that followed, and the faithful love which omitted nothing that could add honour to his name.

This paper was written on the 1st of December, only a fortnight before

the Prince's death. His illness was already upon him. "He could eat no breakfast, and looked very wretched" on the morning of the day on which he roused himself to do this piece of work for the State. In the forenoon the doctors were called in, and it became apparent that the *malaise* of so many days was the precursor of a serious illness.

The Queen has given a full account of this illness in the *Life*: all its vicissitudes, the moments when he was better, the sad attempts to be cheerful and amuse him, all those heartrending changes and signs of weakness which most of us have followed for ourselves and can but too well understand. "I was sadly nervous with the ups and downs of hopes and fears," her Majesty said, feeling all her kingdom as nothing in comparison with that sick room, where she was no Queen but a weeping,



CHORALE IN E $\flat$, COMPOSED BY THE PRINCE CONSORT.

trembling suppliant, praying in vain, as so many have done, for the life most dear to her. Most touching are the details of these troubled days. He asked for music, one of the old chorales, and a piano was brought into the adjoining room, on which Princess Alice played to him the old religious music of his youth. Then, in the stillness of the hushed room, the wife or the daughter would read aloud in a vain attempt to retain his waning attention. Now and then the effort was successful, and he roused himself a little from the heavy torpor which was stealing over him. "He was so pleased to see me, stroked my face and called me *liebes Frauchen*, dear little wife." Thus, with alternations of wistful hope, the days ran on. There was a picture in his room, a copy of one of Raphael's Madonnas, which he said helped him through the day. But even at this point of bodily prostration he could not quite free his mind from the large affairs which, till they dropped altogether out of his hands, had been his chief business. "You have not forgotten the important com-

munication to Nemours," he said, probably wandering in his mind, two days before the end. But by-and-by nothing but an expression of love would come from those pale lips. "Dear wife, good little wife!"—that was all he said.

Many who are still living must recollect the shock and pang of dismay and sorrow with which we all heard on that wintry Sunday morning that the Prince was dead. It was very partially and imperfectly known that his life was in any danger when the sudden terrible news flew forth—news which touched every house as if with a personal blow. The present writer remembers well the wondering pale crowds streaming out of all the churches, where in many cases the news was heard first, or who were met outside at the doors with that mysterious rumour which seems to want no words. We were not able to believe it, and yet knew it must be true, as in the case of all great calamities. Not for his sake—be it said with regret that not until after he was gone from us for ever did the country fully recognise what a man he was—but for hers. Wherever two people met that day throughout the kingdom other questions were forgotten, and all that any voice could say was, "The poor Queen! oh, the poor Queen!" Instinctively, and in a moment, the lesson which so long a course of years had failed to teach was learnt at once. Understanding for the first time all that he had been to her, a flood of pity and terror burst forth, which was stronger than grief in the sensations of the moment. How was she to bear it? It is well known now how she fell under that crushing blow, and, dropping away from all the pleasantness and brightness of life, covered her face and shrank from the light.

It was on the 14th of December, 1861, that Prince Albert died; and it is only since his death that he has received the appreciation which his singularly perfect character deserved. This appreciation he had received more or less from all who came into immediate contact with him in his lifetime; but by the mass of the people, who were not near enough to fall under his personal influence, he was not sufficiently known to be beloved. Perhaps, if truth were told, he was too uniformly noble, too high above all soil and fault, to win the fickle popular admiration which is more caught by picturesque irregularity than by the higher perfections of a wholly worthy life. But since his death, and chiefly since the Queen's own generous and tender impulse prompted her to make the country the confidant of her great love and happiness, the Prince Consort has had full justice. The record of their mutual life has interwoven the happiest and purest sentiments of existence with the national history.

After this great calamity there occurred a blank in the life of the Queen. The unusually close bond between these two, who had shared every thought for one-and-twenty years, is quite enough to explain the state of collapse in which the survivor was left; but there were besides, as so often happens



FUNERAL OF THE PRINCE CONSORT: ARRIVAL AT ST. GEORGE'S CHAPEL.

after loss by death, a thousand reflections of things that might have been done but were not, of opportunities neglected, and indifferent medical advice put up with, which are said to have embittered the painful condition into which her Majesty fell. Who does not know those awful thoughts that overwhelm the mind in such circumstances? "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died," said Martha of Bethany, with a reproach which is echoed in almost every heart that has been parted from its best beloved—more bitter still when it is "Had I done this or that, taken greater precautions, been more quickly awakened to the danger." In fact, this paralysed mourner had not been easily awakened to the danger. She had not believed in it until all further delusion was impossible; and now she sat dumb, taking no share in anything, scarcely answering, scarcely capable of being roused for the performance of a necessary act or to sign the dreadful papers which she would read no longer. For a moment it almost seemed that the most trustworthy of monarchs was about to fail altogether, and end her royal career upon her husband's grave.

Such are the notes of alarm that come to us from the recollections, the letters, and commentaries of the time. Princess Alice stood by her mother faithfully in this valley of the shadow of death, as she had stood by her father in the easier act of dying. But she was only a girl suddenly called out of the happy calm of ordinary life to occupy this post, and knew nothing more of public business than that it was necessary to rouse her mother, to persuade her to append a signature to an official document. One of the Court officials, the secretary of the Prince, attempted what he could do to help the suffering Queen over this terrible moment; but was promptly checked by the Ministers, who would not consent to communicate with her Majesty through any third person. We are bound to add, however, that notwithstanding all these dark intimations the public records of the Queen's acts do not give countenance to the idea that she failed in her duties, or abandoned, however much she might shrink from, the exercise of those which were most incumbent on her. On the 14th of December the Prince died, and on the 11th of January we find the Queen in her place at the head of a meeting of the Cabinet—not a long time in which to sit dumb and turn her face from the light. No doubt it was a countenance of woe which looked upon the statesmen, some of whom had been little respectful of the husband she had lost, though all were overawed and sympathetic now; but at all events she did it, as other widowed women have had to do, the smallest and the greatest thus meeting together, as often, both being in some degree beyond the conventionalities of common life. The seamstress goes back to her work though she scarce can see her needle for the blinding tears, the washerwoman to her tub, the greatest Sovereign in the world to her Cabinet Council; and which is the most hard? Thus, if there was a moment of utter prostration, it was very short. Posterity can often judge

more truly as well as more tenderly than eye-witnesses and contemporaries. If pitying friends could manage it, the poor needlewoman's dim eyes would be sacred for a month; but not for so long could we spare the Queen.

Nor was it only the duties of State which the Queen took up again. A most touching proof that her interest in her people was undiminished was given a few weeks later, when there occurred the terrible Hartley colliery accident, which, terrible as such accidents often are, was more affecting to hear of than almost anything of the kind that has happened, in consequence of the tragic interval in which there were still hopes of saving the entombed miners. It could be nothing but her Majesty's own initiative which sent telegram after telegram to the pit's mouth while yet there was hope, nor any but her own heart which instructed her secretary to say "that her tenderest sympathy is with the poor widows and mothers, and that her own misery makes her feel all the more for them." She was not yet six weeks a widow when this message was sent. These two circumstances, we think, clearly prove that the Queen's overwhelming grief interfered neither with her duties as Queen nor with her own warm and ready sympathy with her people.

This is, perhaps, the only moment of her life in which the Queen has had less than justice from the country. It has been taken for granted that her grief was excessive, and indulged in beyond the legitimate duration of natural grief. It is curious, but true, that nothing calls forth the sympathy of the multitude so warmly, and that of nothing is it weary so soon. Life itself seems to stand still before the face of a great bereavement; there is no one who does not appear to feel an exceptional loss as an almost personal blow for the moment. But the rest of the world goes on, when that moment has passed, upon its business and pleasures, and when it discovers a little while after that the mourner still sits where it left him or her, it is impatient, almost indignant, with the "self-indulgence." We think that the statement of the two facts above indicated is enough to set this matter right, so far as duties which were necessary and the sympathy of the heart are concerned. There is another view of the subject. If her Majesty resumed her place in the Council, her co-operation in all public affairs, she did not, we know, resume those other public offices which concern a different department of duty, either after a legitimate interval or at all. She took her place at the head of the Cabinet, but not in Society any more; and there can be no doubt that this was a misfortune. The fashionable classes—so often and so largely made up of that froth and foam of society which come to the surface, but nevertheless affect much more important things, certainly the standard of manners and even that of morals, and thus have it in their power to spoil the reputation of a country among other nations, if not to influence very deeply its inner life—were left like sheep without a shepherd to their

own foolish guidance, without any head or recognised leader to check their vagaries, to refuse sanction to their follies, or to keep up the level of courtesy and self-respect. That to a woman in mourning, a Queen engaged in the weightiest of affairs, the lighter business of regulating the gaieties and fashions of an idle crowd should have seemed at once inappropriate and impossible it is easy to understand. Nobody able to conceive the situation aright can fail to understand the sickness of heart with which the Queen turned away from those pleasures which she had enjoyed so cordially in her time; and it is easy to persuade oneself that the whirl of gaiety in a London season is quite trivial and of no importance to the country. Yet it is of importance, as it must always be of importance, that even in its enjoyments the highest class should do as little as possible to alienate the sympathies and shock the decorum of, as well as to lower the standard of universal good manners for, those who are below.

At first, of course, there was no question of any such matters as these. The Queen was taken to Osborne, being persuaded with difficulty to quit Windsor—which, we believe, she never liked, nor came back to with any pleasure for many years—before the funeral. She went to Balmoral in the spring. No doubt the fresh air and quiet did her good. At this moment the careful tendance and cheerful common-sense of John Brown, the Prince's favourite attendant, became invaluable to her. And certainly the glimpses of the Queen given us in the letters of Dr. Norman Macleod, her favourite Scottish chaplain, show no morbid spirit, but only a true-hearted woman, very sorrowful but with a mind open to all the consolations and likewise all the corrections that religion could bring. Norman Macleod, as he was always called in Scotland, without any prefix, was a man of singular personal charm and sympathy, and his influence seems to have been very beneficial to the Queen. No one, indeed, can read his account of his interviews with her Majesty without feeling that he was giving faithful utterance to his own actual experiences. "She met me with an unutterably sad expression, which filled my eyes with tears, and began at once to speak of the Prince. She spoke of his excellence, his love, his cheerfulness, how he was everything to her. She said she never shut her eyes to trials, but liked to look them in the face; how she would never shrink from duty, but that all was at present done mechanically; that her highest idea of purity and love was obtained from him, and that God could not be displeased with her love. But there was nothing morbid in her grief."

We think, in the light of such facts, the universal judgment which was passed upon the Queen at this melancholy moment of her life ought at least to be reconsidered. For once the country was unjust to its Sovereign.

It is true that this injustice was indeed the highest compliment which could be paid to the Queen. England grudged her seclusion, her mourning,

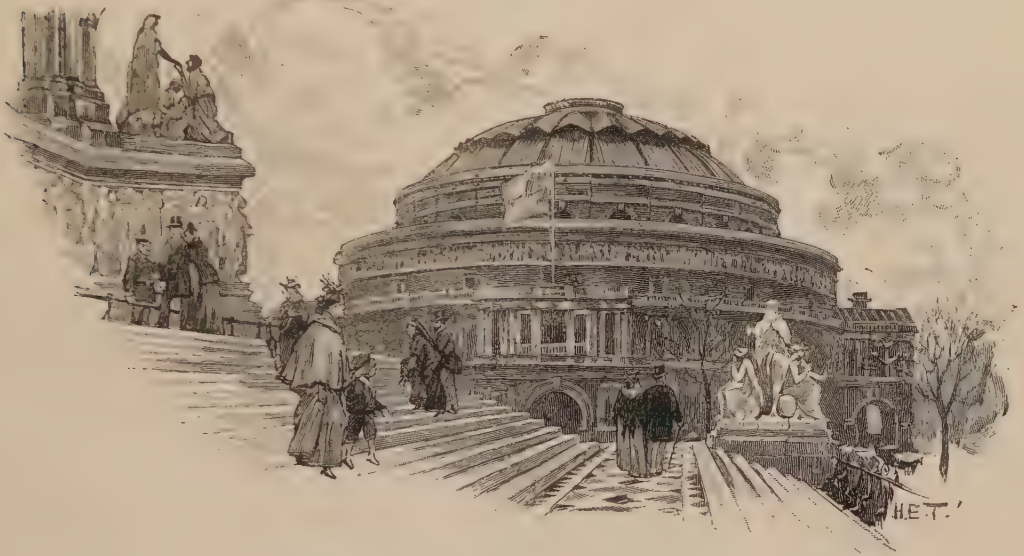


THE HARTLEY COLLIERY DISASTER: READING THE QUEEN'S LETTER OF SYMPATHY.
(From the painting by H. J. Emmerson, by permission of Mr. J. Hare, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.)

the grief of her widowhood; although at the same time, with very natural and truly English perversity, the country was afterwards proud of the faithful sorrow which would not be comforted. The grievance of the nation against her was that in her trouble she fell out of that intercourse with her people in which they have always delighted. They no longer saw her, no longer were able to crowd about her path, to cheer when she passed, to feel her participation in national pastimes and pageants as a justification of every holiday; and this it was which gave the sting to discontent. The pageants, too, ceased, which was something still more evident. No great shows of State were possible when the Head of the State shut her doors to visitors and her heart to all amusements and pleasures. In the next May after the Prince Consort's death another great exhibition was opened in London, a ceremonial shorn of all the gladness and the brightness of the former one, which must have been the most woeful farce to many of those who had taken part in the first, and only a subdued gratification to the crowd. It is not too much to say that the heart of the country was wounded by the length of the period of sorrow. It was not, indeed, very long before the Prince of Wales's marriage furnished a kind of substitute in Society for the closing of Buckingham Palace, but that was a very young household, and nobody in England felt that the Queen's place could be filled by any substitute while she herself was still capable of holding it. There was an element of popular tyranny and cruelty in the displeasure caused by her long withdrawal, yet it was also an exhibition of that which is the grand security of every throne, and which is nowhere so strong a bulwark as in Great Britain—the genuine, if aggrieved, personal affection and regard of a whole people.

It has been said again and again, to her eternal honour, that the Queen never failed in her attention to public business, even in this long period of retirement. "Never kept us waiting," was the familiar statement of a Cabinet Minister. The moment of bitter breakdown was very short—a few weeks only. And then the Queen resumed her labours alone, reading the despatches, going over the papers of State, which now must have made a much greater strain upon her faculties, and reminded her at every sentence of the dread vacancy beside her, where there was now no clear head, no steadfast support of trained intelligence to make comprehension easier. Nevertheless, it has never been said that the royal judgment faltered, or even that the work was less well done. And here arises a remarkable question, which no one, so far as we are aware, has ever entered into. For many years the object of the Queen's life was to convince the world that all that was worthy in the first twenty years of her reign was the doing of the Prince Consort. To him was due all that was wise, all that was noble. Had we taken her Majesty at her word, most sincerely given and in perfect good faith, as it was, we should have looked for nothing but complete breakdown, and a season of helpless misery and distraction,

ending either in the reduction of the Queen to a puppet monarch, giving signatures and murmuring assents without either power or influence—or a puppet of a still more usual kind, falling into the hands of favourites, and ruling, or pretending to rule, as they guided. Both Great Britain and the world are fully aware that nothing of the kind happened. Her Majesty resumed her place, and the wheels of State rolled on as before. If she were by herself unable to grasp the problems of State, if her judgment failed, if she ceased to have an independent opinion, no one has ever breathed a word to that effect. Statesmen have died, and their lives have been written, and many a troublous and painful secret, and many a secret whisper, has been made known to the world; but amid all these



THE ALBERT HALL FROM THE ALBERT MEMORIAL.

babblings no one has ever ventured to say, Alas! things were different now; that when the Prince was gone who kept her right, the Queen's influence was gone or diminished. One can imagine that in her generous enthusiasm for him it would almost have pleased her Majesty had something of this kind been said; but, so far as we are aware, it never was said—nay, nor hinted—amid the manifold gossipings of a Court. If she owed all to her husband, as her Majesty has over and over again told us, to what has she owed it that her great career has gone on undiminished? Her complete self-abnegation was beautiful, and there is no doubt that it was expressed with entire sincerity; but there can be still less doubt either that Prince Albert's royal pupil had attained by the time he left her to the power of standing alone, or that her attribution of every wise instinct to him never prevented a large admixture of her own.

And life would not be stopped in its course even for that terrible interruption of death. The family of mourners began one by one to return to their careers. In May of 1862 Prince Alfred rejoined his ship, making one youthful and smiling countenance the less at Balmoral. In June the Prince of Wales returned, bringing his tale of experiences from the East, whither he had gone to carry out a tour planned by his father before his death, every detail of which was carried out according to those sacred instructions. And on the 1st of July the Princess Alice, who had become her mother's right hand through all these dismal days, as she had been her father's nurse in his illness, was married in private at Osborne with a subdued ceremony, so different from the triumphant wedding of her elder sister, in the midst of a close circle of the family, with very few spectators save those who were bound by the nearest ties. Tears took the place of smiles for this gentle and tender-hearted bride. Her mother could scarcely hear out the service; her father was gone from the place he should have held by her side, to give her to the bridegroom he had approved. This royal lady may be said never to have got entirely beyond that atmosphere of tears. Her life was overclouded by the internal wars in Germany, in which her husband had to take his part, and by many cares such as it is strange to think an English princess could be exposed to; and she died, as we say, before her time, carrying out the wonderful drama of woe and sorrow which seemed to be her inheritance—died of a kiss from dying lips, after wearing out her strength in anxious nursing, on the anniversary of her father's death, completing thus the cycle of devotion in a manner the most pathetic that could be imagined. But there was happiness also in the cup, and no evil bodings, though many sad associations and regrets, at the moment of this marriage. Thus the wheels of life began to move, the boys came and went, the bride departed, and all again began to be, with one terrible difference, as it had been.

Less than a year later another gorgeous marriage took place in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, the marriage of the Prince of Wales to the Princess Alexandra of Denmark, an event which called forth an outburst of enthusiasm from the country, perhaps a little to be accounted for by the cessation for nearly a year and a half of any kind of public rejoicing, and the hope of better times to come, as well as from genuine loyalty and delight in the promise of those better times which this marriage ensured. The Queen was present only in her closet, the royal place, much like an opera-box, from which, indeed, the whole wonderful and glorious scene in that most beautiful of chapels could be better seen than from any other point. Dr. Macleod describes the expression of her face as she raised it during the performance of the chorale, which was a composition of Prince Albert's, as the most wonderful he had ever seen. "She seemed to be with him before the throne of God." That these ceremonies were

painful reminders to her Majesty of all the gladness that was lost out of her own life need not be wondered at; but she never withdrew from them altogether, nor left her children without the sanction of her presence.

A droll incident, which might perhaps be considered allegorical too, is reported by a less enthusiastic historian of this wedding. "The little Prince



Photo: Mayall & Co., Piccadilly, W.

ROYAL GROUP PHOTOGRAPHED ON THE PRINCE OF WALES'S WEDDING DAY, MARCH 10TH, 1863.

William of Prussia [now the Emperor of Germany] came in between his two little uncles [afterwards the Dukes of Connaught and Albany] to keep him quiet, both of whom, the Crown Princess told me, he bit on the bare Highland legs whenever they touched him to keep him quiet"—a curious and precocious exhibition of character.

The Queen's private occupations for some years after this were very much

concerned with one subject—which was to make her husband and his remarkable life and character known to the world. Her mind was engrossed with busts and statues, with the preparation of a beautiful dwelling for his remains, and lastly with the erection of another kind of memorial, one still more likely to reveal those perfections and the associations upon which her heart dwelt so proudly, the romance of her youth, and the happiness of her married life. To raise some such monument to those we have lost, is it not the dearest wish of every mourner, though there are few who have a story so unique to tell? Criticism has usually little to say upon the work of a royal author. There have been few indeed in history, and none, we think, who upon the ground of literature alone have laid claim to the applause of men; sometimes their works have been more valuable, in the absence of all literary charm, than the finest efforts of genius, as throwing light upon corners of history, and upon the motives which make history, such as cannot be attained in any other way. But the Queen's first book was, so far as we know, unique, possessing in one way a power like that of genius, a power almost of creation in its perfect simplicity and truth. The Prince Consort had been, as we have said, a somewhat veiled figure, presenting in the depth of his self-abnegation a blank to the world, through which few gleams of his natural character were allowed to shine. His handsome face was, like the man, well formed, well coloured, worthy of admiration, but with the force of individual experience so controlled and kept down that the eyes of the spectator returned puzzled from any attempt to read or divine it. He had taken up in its fullest, almost in its literal sense, the duty of "effacing myself in Victoria," which he early conceived as the object of his life. It was now the part of the Queen to do justice to him who for her sake had never done justice to himself.

The inspiration which suggested to her Majesty the story of her own romance and of her early years as the best way of doing this was worthy of a poet. In no other way could it have been so simply or so fully done. We will not pretend to claim for the Queen any purely literary gift. She is no student of style, nor does she ever, we imagine, ponder and wait for the best word; but nature has given her a pretty simplicity of utterance, very womanly, even womanish if the reader pleases, the language pre-eminently of the happy and guileless young Englishwoman of her own era, in whom feeling and sentiment were supreme, and intellectualism of every kind was still sometimes gently, sometimes severely, discouraged. There is an air of eternal youth in these simple utterances; the heart of the writer thrills to all gentle emotions, to her imagination all things are pure, and nobleness and goodness are the characteristics of all whom she loves. It is not a spell, perhaps, which could charm long; and, indeed, in the later journals from the same hand we feel that it falls into the style of the household chronicle with fatal ease. But in the first instance it was as original as if

it had been a work of genius—fresh, simple, direct, with all a girl's power of idealising her lover, and all a woman's admiration for the qualities of the man who had suddenly become her standard of every virtue.

The elements of the book, which was published in 1867 under the title of the "Early Years of the Prince Consort," had been gradually collected in the privacy of the royal family from journals and letters during the years that succeeded his death, and was at first intended only for his children and intimate friends. With a fine instinct the Queen went back to that period, the beginning of their joint life, and also the period which rouses more ready sympathy than any other, that beginning to which the mind so pathetically turns when the survivor pauses at the end of the common path, to the days that are no more. The eldest daughter at home, Princess Helena, now a woman grown and able to comprehend her mother's feelings, translated such of the letters as were in German, and only hands most dear to him touched the loving memorial until it was so far advanced that the advice and help of someone more experienced seemed necessary. The editor chosen was General Grey, long a member of the household, and consequently almost as familiar and intimate in the close knowledge of every day as the members of the family themselves. That even he was startled by the first communication of pages so overbrimming with personal feeling, such as few persons in any condition of life and no sovereign had ever attempted to express so freely, may be gathered, we think, from his preface; but he had the good sense and feeling to perceive that so simple and sincere a claim upon the sympathy of her people, an appeal so tender, so frank and true, could not but add to the affectionate devotion which the country entertained for her Majesty. It would almost seem, however, that General Grey hesitated before the idea of giving to the general public a revelation so complete. "As I believe your Majesty intends to limit the circulation of this volume to your Majesty's own children and family or, if it goes beyond them, to a very small circle of intimate friends, I have not thought it necessary to omit any of the very interesting and private details contained in your Majesty's memoranda, or to withhold the touching expressions of your Majesty's feelings as given in your Majesty's own words. Some of these details, particularly those relating to your Majesty's marriage, it might seem unusual to include in a work intended for more general perusal, though even in that case, judging of others' feelings by my own, I cannot doubt that they would meet with the warmest and most heartfelt sympathy."

It was finally decided to give the book for that "general perusal" which at first startled the feelings of the members of the Court, though never, we should think, the Queen herself, then so strongly under the sway of those profoundest sentiments of nature which make the whole world kin, and at the same time longing for her people's sympathy, and that everyone who ever saw her should know how noble and good was the hero of her drama, the

lover of her youth. An anecdote, which we find among many, of her Majesty's intercourse with her peasant neighbours at Balmoral gives, we think, as fine a picture of the new link woven between her and all mourners as the most eloquent pen could supply. One of the villagers, in whom the Queen and her family had taken a great interest, had lost her husband, long an invalid and bedridden, during the interval between the end of a happy visit of the royal family to the north and the return of the widowed Queen, in the first deep gloom of her bereavement. One of the first things her Majesty did was to pay a visit to this poor woman.

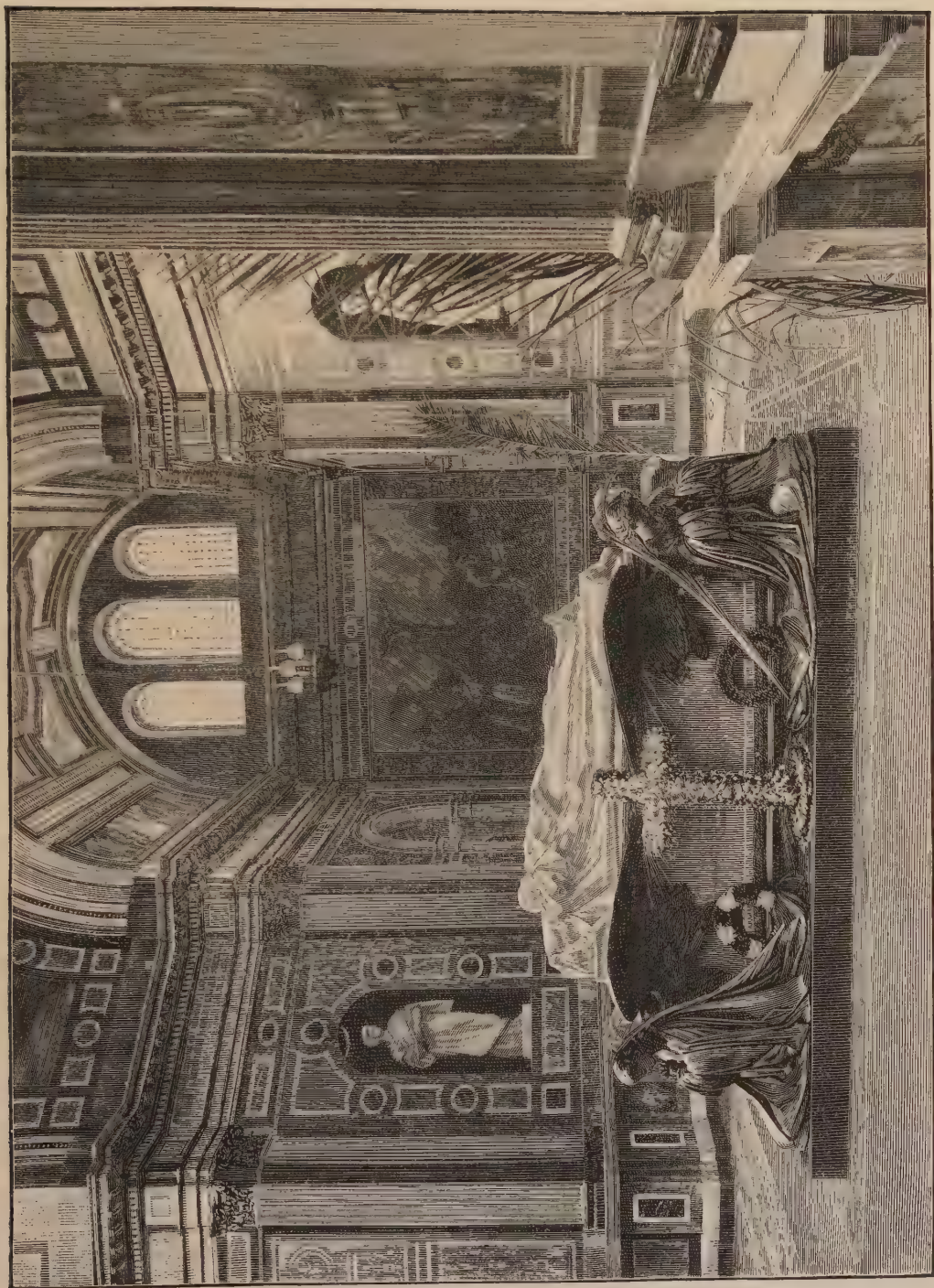
"And we both cried: she cried and I cried. I controlled myself as soon as I could, and asked her pardon for crying. 'But oh!' said the Queen, 'I am so thankful to cry with someone who knows exactly how I feel.' And she afterwards said, 'You saw your husband's death coming, but I—I did not see—it was so sudden!'"

"*I am so thankful to cry with someone who knows what I feel.*" This was the spirit in which the Queen examined her old diary and selected her letters. She came to her people, as she had gone to the poor woman on Deeside, with hands held out, appealing to their kindness. "Weep with me," was the outcry of her heart. And the world responded with an answering outcry of sympathy which was full also of amazement and pity and love. For who else had ever so laid bare her heart? and who else had the right, the privilege to do so? secure as she was and never doubting, of the interest, the sympathy, the affection of all. Sometimes there is the highest truth in that fiction of royalty which says "*My people*," when a monarch has the heart and courage to believe and trust to it. We who stand upon lower levels hope for a sympathiser here and there, an unknown friend who will know what we mean; but the Queen reckoned upon her kingdom with such a certainty as is more persuasive than any argument. She knew that all hearts would acknowledge her claim. This required a great trust, a great faith in her people; but it was fully justified.

We will not say that the "*Leaves from the Highland Journal*" were equally impressive. Such a story as her Majesty had to tell can be but once told. Something of the same glamour, some wonderful touches of natural feeling, expressed with a simplicity which was always most genuine, yet perhaps suited better the story of youth rather than the records of middle age, were still in these rambling confidences and records. But perhaps it would have been better had the one unique performance been left as the only one. The less fine effect of the others has done something to dim the shining of that little pearl of autobiography, to which there is no parallel in literature so far as we are aware. We trust that posterity will redeem this book from among the others, and do it justice. Needless to say that the after historian of the Victorian era will always consider it as one of the most admirable of the many *mémoires pour servir* upon which his work will be built.

Her Majesty's characteristic style has always come out in the loving

Ansgar Harpys Gramis -
W.D. Stewart



THE MAUSOLEUM, FROGMORE.

messages which now and then she has addressed to her people, always with the same directness, simplicity, perfect conviction of their sympathy, and unbounded faith in their faith. In her complete and unwavering confidence in their immediate response there has never mingled a shade of arrogance, never a touch of imperial superiority: upon that serene height pride vanishes and pretension is impossible, besides that by nature the Queen is never proud. That true feeling of equality, which is so little felt in a democracy though so frequently professed, is warm as nature in her—the equality of human feeling, of individual happiness and sorrow, of all that constitutes and individualises man, be he prince or peasant. “She cried, and I cried,” said the peasant woman. It is curious to find how often the truest democrat, in the best sense of the word, is to be found in the highest places, where the principles of political democracy are least approved or known.



THE QUEEN'S SEAL OF STATE.

CHAPTER VII.

THE POSITION AND CHARACTER OF THE QUEEN.

WE have said that for some time after the death of the Prince Consort the country, out of sheer love, was unjust to its Sovereign. Though this is perhaps a paradox, it is absolutely true. The very intensity of the sympathy in her loss moved the world about her to a conviction that after a time she ought to be consoled. The earnestness of their desire to have her in their midst, to make up to her and comfort her, to surround her with love and loving-kindness, became a sort of grievance in their mind when it appeared to them that she refused to be comforted. Though all the likings both of the Queen and Prince were for a quiet family life, yet they had not shrunk from the necessity of suppressing these inclinations. They had been much in public, seen everywhere, refusing no duty, showing themselves with as much genial kindness as they were received with sympathetic affection. But now all this was over. It might well have been thought that when the Queen had sent a pair of charming young Princesses in the flower of youth to hold a Drawing Room, she had done very well indeed for the select public who appear at such ceremonials; and that these beautiful young ladies were really more appropriate to the pageant than a Queen now approaching middle age and sadly shadowed by overpowering trouble. But that has never been the opinion of the country. No one could be more popular than the Princess of Wales. Her beauty was the pride of England, and she was at the age when beauty is most delightful: yet then and for years afterwards, even when the Queen began to grow old, when she had lost the advantages of appearance which she possessed in her youth, there was scarcely a face which did not cloud over a little to hear that it was the Princess, and not the Queen, who would receive their homage. It was not that they loved the Princess less, but that they loved the Queen more. A murmur of discontent was heard here and there. We are not aware, however, whether her Majesty ever knew of this sense of grievance. She did all her private duties unwaveringly, with no failure in any branch of the business of the country. But she did assuredly slip out of the common life. For years she appeared at no ceremony more cheerful than the unveiling of a statue or the inauguration of a monument.

The deepest mourning was her only wear and her lost happiness her chief thought.

At the same time the Queen was uncharged in her many labours, in her diligent attention to the business of the Crown; and among her dependants, the cottagers in the North and at Osborne, her humble friends everywhere, she was the same, omitting no kind observance, neglecting no duty—doing everything on the higher scale to forward the advantage of her country, and on the lower to promote the general peace and good pleasure of all about her. She spent more time in



THE QUEEN UNVEILING THE STATUE OF THE PRINCE CONSORT AT BALMORAL.

the country, especially in those two homes which the Prince Consort had wholly established and founded. We believe it may be said that she never returns with pleasure to Windsor, which is always overshadowed by the cruel recollections of suffering and death; and Buckingham Palace is almost deserted. It was years before she would look at a play, of which she had been formerly so fond, and she has never entered a theatre again. A good deal of moving about denoted that sick desire for movement which is one of the characteristics often of great grief. Her Majesty went to Balmoral twice in the year instead of confining herself to the usual autumn holiday. She was much at Osborne. From time to time she went to Germany, which the presence of her two elder daughters there made doubly dear to her, and



A COTTAGE BEDSIDE AT OSBORNE



on the occasion of her first visit made a pilgrimage of love to all the spots, specially, which were connected with the Prince's early days. She had so many children still quite young, Princess Beatrice and Prince Leopold being still small children at their father's death, that it is to be hoped there was some internal warmth in the irrepressible gaiety of their early years to keep her heart alive, but the Queen was what is called in the New Testament "a widow indeed," seeking only, in additional kindness to all and overflowing charity, some measure of consolation for all the manifold deprivations of her lot.

Meanwhile another source of solace came in the successive appearance of one new baby after another in the new houses which began to spring up around her, offshoots from the great family tree. The Queen has always been distinguished by her love of children, which is one of the great compensations to women for the special sufferings and weaknesses to which their constitutions make them liable. We do not say that this love is not in many cases equally developed in man, but it is more limited, confined chiefly to the more amusing and interesting moments of childhood; and rarely embraces the new-born, from the moment of his birth and through all the circumstances of his infantile progress, as the mother's *par excellence* does. To some minds it will seem almost ludicrous to imagine that a woman occupied with the fate of millions, and possessing much of the high instincts of the great Sovereign, should enter her cabinet and sit down to the serious work of State with a distinct exhilaration in her mind and more perfect disposition for her work, because her letters that morning have brought the news that an infant in a distant palace yesterday for the first time walked alone! But in the Queen's immense and most serious correspondence there would be nothing, perhaps, that affected her like this, making the sunshine sweeter and toil more pleasant. We say a great deal about women's disabilities in these days, but little about the special gifts which find consolation for them in the simplest events. A baby *bon mot*, a nursery prank or feat, are often like the wine and oil of allegory, "oil that maketh the face to shine, and bread that strengtheneth the heart," to a woman—better than applause, sweeter than success. The Queen drank deep of this "brook in the way"; another and another baby came to press against her broken heart, and bind up its wounds. The two little girls of Princess Alice were probably the first to bring this profound and pure refreshment with them. They were brought to the Queen, while their parents were travelling, to make a long stay and amuse her daily and hourly, and perhaps not even when they grew up into beautiful young women were this cluster of Princesses, some of them now so highly advanced in the world, of more pleasure and comfort to the Sovereign of England than when they were innocent infants knowing nothing about royalty, but accustomed to pull her gown, or climb on her knee in their nursery days.

Marriage followed upon marriage in this period of seclusion. The Princess Alice had been married privately in her mother's presence under the very shadow of death. The Prince of Wales followed in triumph and splendour, though still his mother's mourning was unchanged. One by one the other sons and daughters followed in the same way; the young men wedding afar, one amid the splendour of the Russian Court, one in the intimate circle of German Royalty. In these days, when war seems in the air, it is curious to reflect how closely allied the first family in England is with the Continental nations which from time to time have made an angry ring round this country, and menaced other proceedings, which, however, have never fortunately been carried out. In Germany the Queen's grandson sits on an absolute throne; in Russia her granddaughter holds a similar place. Indeed, the royal houses in Europe are more like a large and scattered family interwoven together by many bonds of nature than the heads of so many different races—a fact which ought more and more to tell for peace but, unfortunately, does not always seem to do so. There is something amazing, almost ludicrous were it not so dreadful, in the possibility that war might be proclaimed against Great Britain and its Sovereign by young men who have been nursed in the lap of the Queen, and who, whatever warrings of hostility, battles by land or sea, there might occur between us, must be always to her Majesty as the Willie or the Alec of our own nurseries are to us—wayward children who, whatever may be the pain they give us, are still Willie and Alec to a grandmother's heart.

So great have been the developments of the Queen's family during the period of her widowhood that she is now surrounded by a tribe of royal personages, young and middle-aged, surpassing in number that of any other family in all our long succession of monarchs. No king or queen has ever had so many relations, so many close personal alliances. It is seldom, indeed, at least in England, that a royal family has extended much in the second generation. King George the Third's family of fifteen sons and daughters were represented only by some six or seven descendants; but those of the Queen are almost without number, so that there is a goodly band even of great-grandchildren about the steps of her throne, and it would seem impossible to imagine the dwindling down of such a tribe into such impoverishment as that from which the infant queen delivered her race. The Queen has been occupied much with all these alliances and developments. A new wedding, a new birth, must have become to her the very commonplaces of existence. Her sons and daughters were scarcely more than disposed of in this way when her grandsons and granddaughters began. These complicated and continual businesses of so large a family have kept her Majesty's hands and her heart full. She has rarely been free from some love story, some settlements to be made, or circumstances to be harmonised. It is well known that the Queen has always

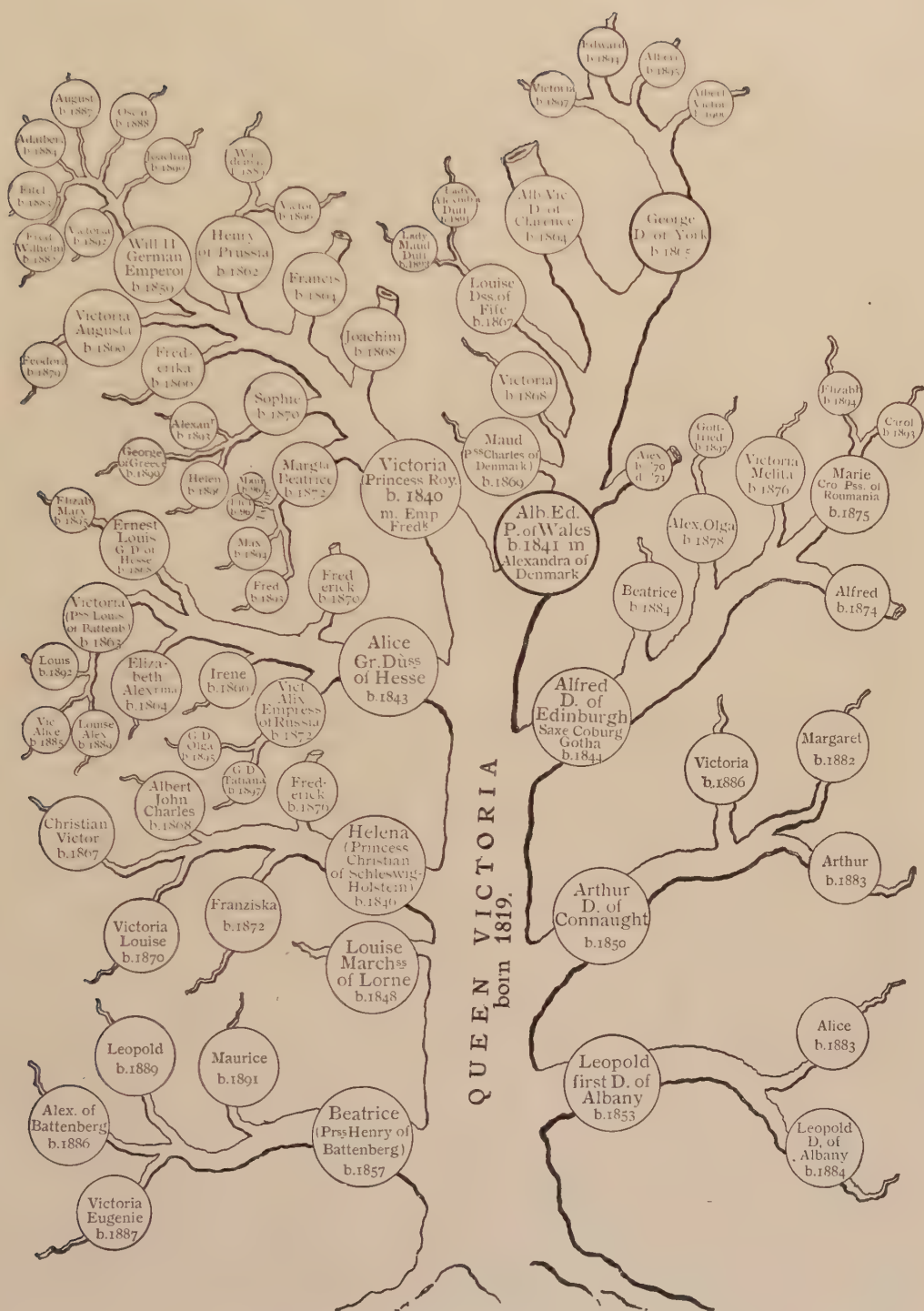


THE MARRIAGE OF THE PRINCE OF WALES.
From the painting by G. H. Tinner, in the Royal Collection.

retained the freshest and most lively interest in a love affair, and has let neither royal prejudice nor any other argument stand in the way of such combinations as brought happiness. And she has kept her heart fresh by the far-extending interests, the links of new connection which have stretched out from her house in all directions.

In a family circle so wide there is always something going on for good or evil, for joy or sorrow. The drama of domestic life has surrounded this one central figure with an unfailing sweep and current of life. With the Queen's loneliness we have all sympathised; the strange isolation of which a woman, once so constantly enclosed and attended by the unfailing companionship of the one person in the world most dear to her, became suddenly aware when that close companion failed from her side, has already called forth the affectionate pity and regard of both her own and other nations; but perhaps the great compensation afforded by the exuberant life which has flowed from her has not been sufficiently estimated. No woman of her generation has so clearly revealed herself as a wife; but her *rôle* as a mother, which, in the nature of things, it is more difficult to reveal, has been even greater and more remarkable. She has been appealed to on all sides, and turned a deaf ear to none. Lord Tennyson apostrophised the Prince Consort after his death as the "silent father of our kings to be." But the Queen appears as the mother of half a world. Her descendants are always coming and going, their interests reach over the earth. The year is full of their birthdays as contemporary history is full of their movements; scarcely a month that there is not a list of the one, not a day that newspapers and the universal talk of the world are not ringing with the other. That this fact adds to her Majesty's occupations there is no doubt; it ought to add enormously to her influence, and who can doubt—that which is the most certain of all—that it has added to her capacity for endurance in life, and sweetened the cup of existence as nothing else could have done?

Something of the Queen's life in this respect may be gleaned from the letters of the Princess Alice, who was in a special manner the daughter of her heart. Not that there is any indication of favouritism in respect to any one of the Queen's family. But Princess Alice was her companion at the most awful moment of her life, taking almost the command at the only time when the Queen's hand was incapable of it, and affording to her mother that support which only a brave, steadfast, and faithful child, whether son or daughter, can give. Her marriage in the midst of these melancholy circumstances, her children the first that brought the sweet consolation of baby babble and laughter into the widowed house, and finally, and perhaps most of all, her early death, which consecrates and enhances every affection, made her specially dear and cherished; and though her Majesty's share of the correspondence has not yet been given to the world, the affectionate details of the Princess's letters, describing



GENEALOGICAL TREE OF THE QUEEN'S FAMILY

everything, from the *triste campagne* of 1866 to the furniture in the new house, which the young lady flatters herself is so much more English than German, do much to show the mother's minute and affectionate sympathy as much as if she had herself spoken. The furniture became more and more the mother's gift as repeated remittances arrived, which enabled the young pair to pay for it, for the Princess and her husband were poor. Their aid was wanted for a thousand matters in the small Principality, and their means were small. Her report of having made some pelisses, "not embroidered" she allows with a tone of apology, but every stitch of them done by her own hands, is one of the details which please all women certainly, and many men more than a picture painted or a book written could do—an unreasonable prejudice, perhaps, but a very true trait of human feeling. In everything the Princess would seem to have been a most careful housekeeper, and every point is recounted with the utmost certainty of sympathy to the kind mother, upon whom it is evident much of the comfort of the small princely house in Darmstadt depended. But it was the war of 1866, between Austria and Prussia, which made Princess Alice's touching domestic story most interesting, and the description of the preparations for it, made most unwillingly on both sides, is very striking. Austria and France had already been pitted against each other in the wars of 1859 for the independence of Italy, the first breach of the peace of Central Europe for so many years; but now here was brother against brother painfully called into the field, in what really was, for once at least, one of those rare wars made by kings against the will of their subjects, which are so cruel. The Princess, in deep alarm herself and trembling for her husband, had still time to think how dreadful it was for Vicky and Fritz on the other side, the Crown Prince and Princess in Berlin, who desired it as little as Hesse did—and for Henry, a brother of Prince Louis, it was still more terrible, as he was actually in the Prussian army. "He can't desert at such a moment, and yet if he should have to draw his sword against his country, his brothers fighting on the other side!" "What would dear papa have said to all this? I know your warm heart is aching for Germany," the Princess wrote, and her brief notes, so full of the anguish and indignation of the crisis, have an underlying petition in them which she dared not put into words. "Uncle Alexander returned from Vienna two days ago, ('the Emperor') frantic at being forced into war, but fearing now no more to be able to prevent it." "Cannot the other three Powers interfere and step in at this dangerous crisis, proposing a Congress or anything, so as to avert this calamity?" she cries in her anxiety. "I hope that the other Powers will interfere, and not look on whilst these brothers cut each others' throats."

There can be little doubt what the Queen's feelings must have been, but she had to stand still and do nothing, one of those special

afflictions of the great ones of the earth with which humble persons are not assailed. To stand by and see many things which are contrary to right, which are productive of misery, and yet not interfere; to have so much power and yet do nothing! Her daughter's unavailing entreaties were part of the Queen's burden, which was so heightened by anxiety for many of her family concerned, and heavy with the grief and dismay with which she had to look on and see a country which she loved dismembered and stained with kindred blood, the country which was her husband's country, and more dear still for his sake. One daughter with her husband was on one side, another with hers on the opposite. "Cannot the other great Powers interfere?" How anxiously would a mother have hastened to interfere in another case; but this mother, who was the greatest Power of all, was also a constitutional Sovereign, and there was no more to be said. The Queen sent contributions for the wounded, that miserable provision which it is so terrible to begin to make in cold blood, when the gallant fellows are marching out in all the glory of life so unsuggestive of any need of the kind; and she received the children sent off to the security of England to be out of harm's way, but she could do no more. The Queen has had to stand thus looking on at many wars in which, without being immediately involved in them, her heart and her deepest feelings were engaged with friends on both sides. That is a trouble, it may be said, that she shares with many another; but it can scarcely be so hard on the humbler members of society, who can evidently do nothing, as it is upon one who could do so much but, bound by duty and honour, has only to stand still and look on. And even more and stronger than this may be the statement. The Queen has at all times held the balance true by the exercise of her own admirable good sense and judgment, and consistently done her utmost to keep the country from interference, even in circumstances where her own heart must have leant that way and even her Ministers were inclined for war, as in the case of Schleswig-Holstein. She has lent all the aid that any experienced statesman could, strengthened by her influence and position individually, as one of the most important personages in Europe, to quench the beginnings of discord and find out some way of reconciling differences; but, beyond that, has always resisted every impulse to join the fray, and we believe that on more than one occasion this resistance has turned the scale.

After all that has been said of her withdrawal from public ceremonials, it was only five years after the Prince's death when her Majesty consented once more to open Parliament in person. She would not, nor has she ever since, put on the gorgeous robes appropriate to that function over her mourning; the crimson and the gold lay spread out behind her upon the royal chair, which brought into still further evidence the isolation of that one figure in black, seated in the midst of the splendid group. Princess Alice, in her distant home, followed with aching sympathy of heart her

mother's movements on that important day. "I am happy to think," she writes, "that you are quiet in Osborne after all you had to go through. The emotion and all other feelings recalled by such an event must have been very powerful and tried you much. It was noble of you, my darling Mamma, and the great effort will bring compensation. Think of the pride and pleasure it would have given Papa, the brave example to others not to shrink from their duty."

After this beginning the Queen no longer refrained from occasional participation in the great ceremonials which demanded her presence, so that when all is said that can be said it was not, after all, a very long time in which her widowed seclusion was complete.

The Queen's share in politics is very unlikely to be fully known, either in her own lifetime or that of even the younger generations contemporary with her. Posterity will know much better than we can expect to do what it really was. Already there begin to appear in the memoirs, sometimes indiscreet, of dead statesmen and politicians an anecdote here and there which reveals her figure amid the crowd of statesmen, never opposing a measure which is clearly and unmistakably the desire of the people, yet never relinquishing her own opinion or giving passive assent upon a doubtful subject. So far as these fragmentary sources of information have yet been disclosed, there has been no moment in which her Majesty has resisted unduly the conclusions of her responsible Ministers; but the advantage of her different point of view has been apparent in the arrest of hasty measures; and the necessity of convincing so composed a mind with reasonable arguments, and of going once more into every reason for and against, in order to attain this end, has been of the greatest use in legislation, and especially in the treatment of foreign affairs. We say responsible Ministers, using the necessary jargon of constitutionalism; but the Queen has never held herself irresponsible nor considered it her business to be passive, and merely to assent to what others do. We do not now execute either monarchs or Prime Ministers for political errors; but the Queen has always held herself responsible to God, responsible before the bar not only of her own people but of all the keen observers in the high places of other nations, who probably know her real course of action better than we do, each of them having a private adviser whose duty it is to note everything, and to whom her Majesty's individuality is at least as interesting as that of any Prime Minister. There are few Prime Ministers, besides, who have so many means of understanding foreign politics as the Queen has, the happiness and progress of her own family being so involved in them, and all their interests demanding the closest consideration of questions which affect their welfare, and the manner in which this country should act towards them. She has never pushed the balance, of which she may be said to have the charge, to one side or the other for any personal or family motive, the advantage of Great Britain and the interests of the



"THE CRIMSON AND THE GOLD LAY SPREAD OUT BEHIND HER UPON THE ROYAL CHAIR, WHICH BROUGHT INTO STILL FURTHER EVIDENCE THE ISOLATION OF THAT ONE FIGURE IN BLACK SEATED IN THE MIDST OF THE SPLENDID GROUP" (p. 135).

Empire being her first thought, whatever might happen to her sons and daughters.

There could no higher praise be given. The Queen has kept her personal interests and those of the nation entirely distinct, a thing which we should have thought almost impossible by ordinary rules; but ordinary rules have never controlled the workings of a mind so disciplined and dutiful, yet so independent and sagacious. Her private means of information, the judgments she is able to form from private acquaintance with the great agents in human affairs, have always been at the service of her statesmen; but her opinions have been entirely her own, and her wide outlook and more personal knowledge give these opinions a force which only now and then can be obtained by a private individual, even of high rank. The Queen has been accustomed to watch the development of mind and purpose in foreign sovereigns and political persons, as we watch the households of our relations and intimate friends, with that close family inspection which makes it almost as distinct to a wise head of a large connection how this man or that will act in any possible emergency, as to remember how they have acted in emergencies gone by.

This fact has added immensely to the weight of her Majesty's long experience in public affairs, which of itself is an enormous force. The greatest statesmen are sometimes out of power, and at such times of arrested action are often, sad as it is to say so, disposed to arrest all public action whatever, and thwart their successors in carrying out sometimes the very measures which they have themselves been foiled in bringing to completion, and which they cannot bear that the other party should have the credit of. This is but a poor testimony to human nature, yet it is true enough; and the spectators who behold it, knowing how deeply rooted such sentiments are, do not condemn it with the energy which such a dereliction from absolute duty ought to call forth. But the Queen is never out of office; she has to keep, as we have said, the balance steady, to pursue throughout all changes the measures she approves, following their progress with a judgment quite unbiassed (or, at least, so far unbiassed as humanity permits) by the fact that it is this noble lord and not that honourable gentleman who brings them to perfection. Her Majesty is not superhuman: she has her likings and dislikings. It was no secret that Mr. Gladstone was not one of her favourites, and that it cost her Majesty a little trouble to make up her mind to the constant intercourse with him, which his position as Prime Minister necessitated. We remember to have heard one of the Queen's most intimate counsellors questioned upon this matter. Mr. Gladstone had been at Windsor, and the question was, How did the visit pass off? "Oh," cried the wise interpreter, deeply skilled in evading all unnecessary revelations, "they are like the people in the *Critic*—when they do agree their unanimity is wonderful"; and he gave an amusing account of some minor

measure in which the Queen and statesman were at one, and of the long and animated conversation they had over this, which was a matter of no large political importance, yet very useful as a meeting-ground. There is little doubt that it was the Queen's own wisdom and wit and *savoir faire* which discovered this mode of softening the intercourse and making friendship possible.

The excellent judgment and curiously perfect position thus secured by the Queen—as, so to speak, one of her own chief advisers, a power above politics and party changes, a constant “Moderator,” to use a Scots title, an influence always against haste and in favour of full and patient consideration—has grown with the long years of her unswerving and continual service to the State. Since the days when she was nineteen and played a girlish prank with the horrified statesmen, much to the amusement of the world in general—as recounted in our second chapter—she has never set herself in opposition to any constitutional change or variation of the popular purposes. Perfect discipline of mind, perfect acquiescence when it became her duty to acquiesce, she has always shown; but it has never been passive acquiescence, like that of an automaton. She has always known how to bow her head graciously and gracefully to the inevitable. There was a moment, not very many years ago, when there was the fear of a deadlock in public business, the Lords and the Commons standing facing each other in a grim pause, and all sorts of catastrophes, chiefly for their lordships, predicted by every voice. During this alarming crisis the Queen came into the foreground, with all her powers of argument and persuasion. Great lords, sulky and obstinate, were called all the way up in the cold to Balmoral, grumbling as they went; but came back again moved by the arguments and by the example of the royal lady, who herself had royally and patiently to submit to what the country demanded. And the Lords, too, yielded in obedience and devotion to the Queen. That she should have thus smoothed the way of reconciliation and possible living after having first herself made the sacrifice she asked from others, was a wonderful piece of service to the country—“yeoman's service,” as we say to express what is strongest and most honest, the Queen putting almost literally her shoulder to the wheel. Her great credit and reputation have grown with the years, so that there is now no dissentient voice in the universal acclamations. In her earlier years it was the Queen's endeavour to show, by every generous hyperbole in her power, that all the credit belonged to the Prince Consort and none to herself. Was it so? Her subsequent life seems, as we have said, to make that theory questionable, since, so far as we are aware, her wise, enlightened, and large-minded course of action has gone on developing and growing more important through her solitary years.

There is another remarkable gift which the Queen possesses, which, though not perhaps of direct importance in politics, has great meaning in life, especially in exalted station and among those ruling classes, royal and noble,

which still dominate the world, all theories of equality notwithstanding. She is a genealogist of quite remarkable eminence. We remember to have been told a curious illustration of this which occurred at the Queen's dinner table. Lord Beaconsfield was seated next to the lady from whom we received the story, and there was some discussion regarding an Italian nobleman who had lately taken in hand some remarkable engineering works in his own country, himself the director and designer of everything that was being done. "Do you know anything about him? Who is he?" said Lord Beaconsfield. The lady confessed her ignorance. "We know," said the statesman, "one person who will be sure to know all about him"; and presently taking occasion, he asked the Queen. Her Majesty responded without a moment's hesitation. Yes, she knew all about him. He was of a certain branch, which she indicated, of his ancient house. His mother was of another house equally ancient, equally unknown to common fame. Certain circumstances into which it is unnecessary to enter here had thrown the young man into practical life and made an engineer of the heir of the Crusaders. The Italian duke was accounted for in a moment.

The present writer herself remembers to have been corrected in an account of the children of a family with which she was almost as familiar as her own, by her Majesty's absolutely exact memory. Everybody is aware that the Queen's recollection of faces, that exceedingly fine and gracious piece of courtesy which is perhaps more flattering to the *amour propre* than any other, is still more remarkable. The Queen forgets no one, overlooks no one, never loses an opportunity of ascertaining precisely who and what any person who crosses her path is, and having once inscribed it on those tenacious tablets of her mind, never loses the impression. Her business, indeed, her occupation in this world is with men and women, more even than with despatches that cannot be sent forth and laws that cannot be passed without her consent and signature. She reads those human books and regulates them in their places with instinctive exactitude and knowledge; they are of more importance than the other kind of books to which we appropriate that name, in acquaintance with which her Majesty is not wanting, though not perhaps so warmly interested in them as in that science of life to which all the human combinations possible, the variations of race, the multitudinous drama of family history, are an absorbing study. Such genealogical information as comes from habitual reading of Debrett is not unusual; but with her Majesty the knowledge is deep and profound.

In respect of the other books which are so important in the eyes of a person whose trade it is to write, or with those who derive almost all the relaxation of their lives from reading, the Queen cannot be called a connoisseur. Like most people deeply occupied, Darwin, for instance, she reads novels largely; but, also like Darwin, is not so much concerned about the quality of them or their claim to be called literature. The philosopher loved a story which

had a happy ending, and did not trouble him much with demands upon his intellect; and so does the Queen. She likes to have a book read aloud to occupy the time which, according to her regular and settled routine of work, falls vacant—generally in the afternoon. The maids of honour have this



"SHE LIKES TO HAVE A BOOK READ ALOUD TO OCCUPY THE TIME"

to do among their many little occupations, and the Queen works or knits, or otherwise employs her hands, while this is going on. Works of a high class or of absorbing interest would scarcely consist with this manner of reading. The newspapers are marked for her by her secretaries, so that her time may not be wasted in searching for the particulars which interest her; and graver subjects, the works especially of the day, are condensed for her in a similar way, and laid upon the table, so that a glance here and there may give her a general view of the subject and the manner of treat-

ment. But to be a great reader or a student is impossible to one with so little leisure. Nor could it be claimed for the Queen with any truth that she is a patron, or critic, or authority in literature. This is not the turn of her genius. She has once more proved the curious fact that of all the great arts valued and pursued among men, the art of government is almost, if not altogether, the only one in which men and women meet on equal terms. The greatest woman poet has scarcely touched the levels of great and sovereign poetry, the woman painter has never produced a great picture, nor the woman musician an immortal song. But there have been Queens as great as any man who ever sat upon a throne. It is, perhaps, the rôle in which we should least look for excellence, but it is the one in which it is most usually found. This is the direction which the Queen's mind has taken. She has produced books which are not books, but rather a sort of series of letters straight out of her own heart to the hearts of her own people, from whom at certain periods of her life she has sought the same warmth of sympathy which she is herself ready to give to all in trouble. But her gifts are not literary any more than it can be said that, because she can make a pretty sketch, she has the making of an artist in her. Her drawing masters said so in her youth with a pardonable weakness, proud of the gift which they had cultivated. "She would have been the first female artist of her time had she not been Queen," says one enthusiast; while another recounts a pleasant story, how an Academician found a sketch made by the young Princess in a portfolio, and, hearing it was by a pupil of his friend, declared that the author of it would not long be an amateur. These are pretty tales, and were pleasant to hear when the life of that young Princess lay all in the future and no man knew what it was to be. But at this period it would be disrespectful to the Queen to reproduce them, knowing, as all the world now does, to what her life has come:—not that of an artist, nor one fitted to take the laurels of literature or produce any excelling work of that description; but illustrious in another art, the art of reigning—a greater craft and a more difficult than those pursued by pen or pencil.

We do not, therefore, claim for her Majesty gifts which she certainly does not possess. Her tastes are much those of the multitude. She reads without very much critical discernment; her art is the art of Landseer. These are not the qualities which distinguish her. But when there arise difficulties between nation and nation, when the peace of the world is threatened, when there is trouble at home or tumult abroad, then this lady, who in other matters pretends to no knowledge beyond that of an ordinary woman, rises above the everyday level, and takes a place which Shakespeare would never have attempted to fill. Among her statesmen the most experienced of them all, she holds no merely formal place as head, but strenuously stands for peace, for order, for law, altogether just, altogether disinterested, having no advancement to look for, no risk of losing office, but

only her country's advancement and good to think of, holding back the rash and stimulating the timid, bringing the light of many years and the experience of many emergencies to simplify, to calm, and to subdue debate. Such a power is all the more impressive when it is combined with the mildest aspect of every day, and is the possession of one making no pretension to intellectual power. It is more impressive also than the arbitrary will of the



A YOUNG WOMAN AT HER DEVOTIONS.

(A sketch by the Princess Victoria, dated 1831.)

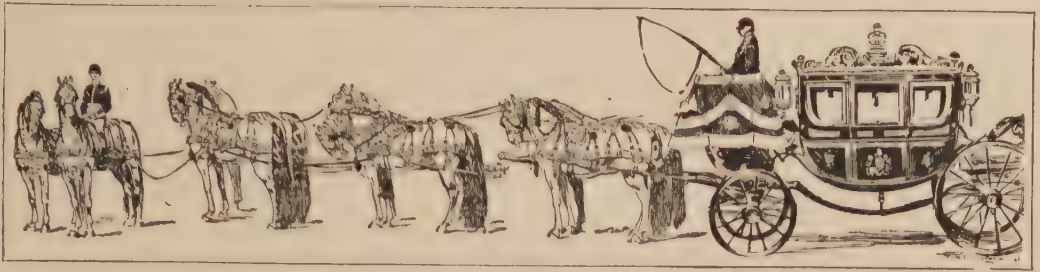
autocrat who decides everything by the dictates of his own wisdom or fancy. The Queen does nothing by herself. The popular appreciation of her character is so great that there have been moments when she might have done so, and been upheld by the unanimous voice of her people. But this thought never enters a mind so disciplined, so true to the lore which she had learnt together with her young lover, in the days when all was new and the world lay at their feet. In her maturity, in her old age, she is the same, with an intelligence ever alert, ever watchful, observant of every sign on the political

horizon, knowing so much that she is not easily discouraged, patient to disentangle those knots of difficulty which the less experienced are so apt to cut or break.

These are the powers of mind and character which we claim for our Queen—not genius nor any show of the intellectual cleverness which many a commoner mind possesses in a much higher degree. But something above these things, the soul of wisdom, the instinct of rule, the power to guide and direct and comprehend the greatest agencies, the movement of the immense and various world, the vicissitudes and alleviations of the civilised universe, those currents of influence which sway the fortune and shape the career of nations and millions of men.



THE QUEEN'S "CREAMS."



THE QUEEN'S STATE CARRIAGE.

CHAPTER VIII.

LATER YEARS.

THE last period of the Queen's life is such as we could all desire for those we love best. "Thou shalt see thy children's children; and peace upon Israel." To her, if to any in the world, has come abundantly the "Honour, love, obedience, troops of friends," of the poet. Her later middle age, and serene and dignified progress through the gathering infirmities of the end of life, are attended by universal reverence, the admiration and applause, we may truly say, of the whole world wherever her name has been heard; and in what obscure corner has it not been heard through all the four continents? The approbation of the whole earth is hers, from the rising to the setting sun; and that is about the greatest thing that earth can give—approbation of her acts, her attitude, her life. Many troublous moments there have been, many alarms; sometimes it has been thought and prophesied that the climax of British power had passed and was over, sometimes it has appeared as if all the other nations were gathering angry round us, furious with our pretensions, furious with our success. But there has been no breach of the peace of Europe except in words, so far as this country is concerned. And in her own private family the Queen has been surrounded through all her later years by a crowd of descendants, some of whom she has seen promoted to the highest thrones of the world, while there are always still at home pleasant groups of prosperous and affectionate young people, filling it, as grandmothers love to feel, with unfailing gaiety and life. Her children's children and peace upon Israel! The blessing is the same to the poorest cottager and the greatest Queen.

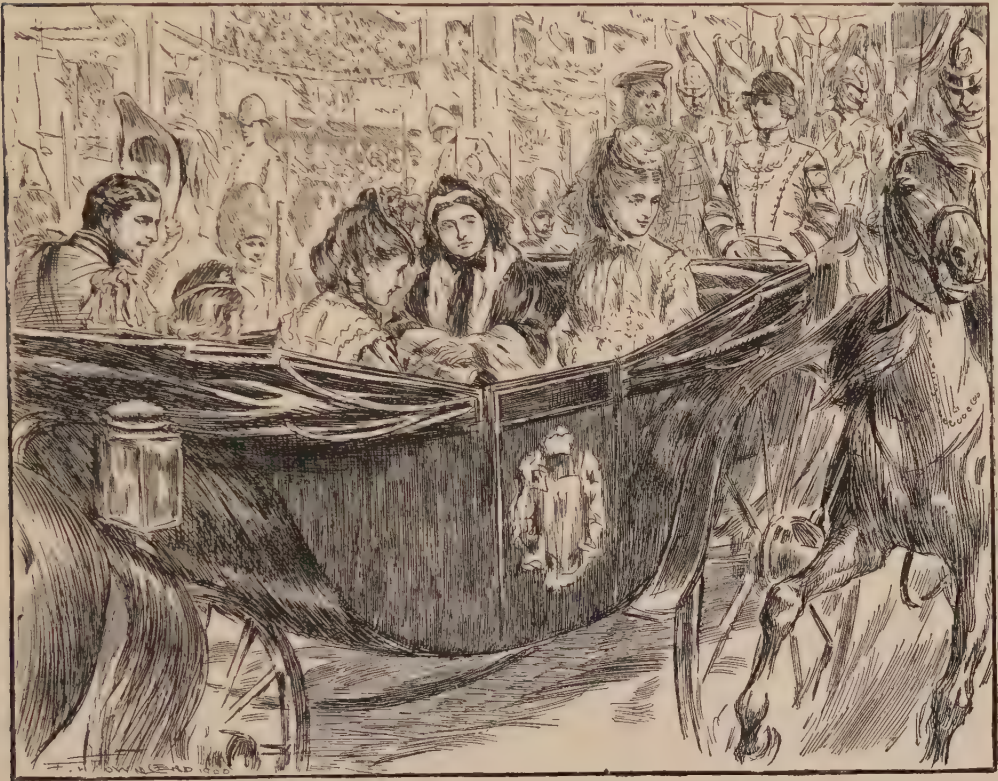
The first of the public festivals in which her Majesty took part after her widowhood, excluding those which formed part of her yearly business, such as opening Parliament, was the public thanksgiving for the recovery of the Prince of Wales from the terrible illness in which he had all but died. That illness had produced a great and, we think, unexpected outburst of feeling throughout the country. It was no exaggeration to say that in England and Scotland it was almost as if the first-born in every house was fighting for his life; not

only were all great festivities abandoned or postponed during the most anxious period of the illness, but little dinners, little tea-parties in villages, the humblest rejoicings, were put off or given up, with a sense of the impossibility of any kind of social pleasure taking place while that life was hanging in the balance. Almost every wife and mother and sister in the country felt herself there in the persons of those three ladies, struggling, as it seemed, hand to hand with death, for the man they loved. Who could think of putting on gay apparel, of dancing or singing, while that struggle went on? We believe that it was entirely unexpected, this sudden wave of fellow-feeling which passed over the country affecting everyone. No bulletin of the most exciting or fateful election was ever studied as that bulletin was, which was exhibited in every public place, and watched for by crowds; and which recorded the vicissitudes of the Prince's illness. A horror of foreboding filled the land; was not fever fatal to those of his blood? Did not his father die like this, though he was never so ill, never so prostrate as these bulletins showed? During that brief period this island, as we may say, had but one heart.

And neither the Queen's constant mourning, nor the loneliness which she continued to feel to the bottom of her heart, kept her back from the great thanksgiving when all these fears were over. The invalid and his nurses went in such a triumph to St. Paul's as no conqueror ever equalled, through seas and floods of men and women, weeping, cheering, bidding God bless the pale mother and son and wife, worn with watching and suffering and anxiety, who were bound to every family all the long way on, as no others could be bound, belonging to us, ourselves in a sublimation of trouble and joy. It is difficult to know what terms to use which will not seem extravagant to describe the extraordinary outburst of sympathy, alloyed by no petty motives, spoiled by no unpleasant gossip, and animated by that sense of absolute unity, with the feelings of the principal persons concerned which is, of all interchanges of human feeling, the most overwhelming. Conquest and triumph are fine things, but they are as nothing in comparison with the joy of a family over the safety of a beloved son. And there was scarcely a family within the four seas which did not take part in that joy. The Archbishop of Canterbury—Archbishop Tait—than whom few men had been so sorely tried with family loss, and whose countenance for many years of his important career was more sorrowful than words could say, was the preacher; and with a fine intuition he took for his subject the extraordinary tide of human emotion which filled the streets and the great Cathedral, that Temple of God in which for ever the great hum of London, like the voice of many waters, fills the silent dome. His text was, "Members one of another," and certainly none could have been better chosen.

Many more public appearances were made by the Queen in the course of

the years, all attended by enthusiasm and a delighted welcome; but none so remarkable or so full of human feeling as this, until there arrived the year of her Majesty's jubilee, the completion of fifty years upon the throne. Then London turned out once more in an immense overflow of rejoicing, when escorted by a band of princes, her sons and sons-in-law, an imposing train and full of interest, among them the future German Emperor (for a few sad, sorrow-stricken months), the Queen made her way to Westminster, where she had been crowned in her youth, to make her thanksgiving.



"THE INVALID AND HIS NURSES WENT IN SUCH A TRIUMPH TO ST. PAUL'S" (p. 146).

Crowds of people waited in the streets from the dawn of the summer morning that they might secure a place to see the Queen pass, and not only London, but the entire country was filled for a few days with universal rejoicing. Every little town was *en fête*, every village decorated and lighted up, beacons blazing from every headland, ships on the far seas decked with flying colours, and wherever Great Britain had a desert settlement or lonely post, and all over the great colonies, cannon roaring and flags flying in honour of the day.

The sixtieth anniversary of her Majesty's accession had in it perhaps a graver note, though almost more overpowering in enthusiasm than any

that preceded it; for then it could not be concealed from any that the Queen was old, beyond the common age of man, and could not in the course of nature be long spared to the subjects whose love for her and pride in her had become a sort of religion, held with more unquestioning faith almost than that which is of greater moment still, with all the force of accumulated enthusiasm from every side, coming upon every wind. Old, and not long to be with us! The last and most touching appeal to love, the last claim after such a world of other claims, to admiration and applause.

The Queen had still both happiness and sorrow before her during the years that intervened between the recovery of the Prince of Wales and the jubilee. It is a curious detail, tending towards superstition, that the Prince's illness was at its worst on the anniversary of the Prince Consort's death, the 14th of December, and that the sad day being safely past he began at once to mend: while on that very same day itself the Princess Alice, the daughter whose name is most closely connected with that of Prince Albert, died, and followed him to the other country. The 14th of December is thus the sad day of the Queen, the moment of disaster which she must always have seen approaching with dread. Princess Alice got her death in a most touching way, as has been already mentioned, having nursed all her children and her husband safely through a very bad epidemic of diphtheria, and finally taken that complaint, in a moment of great weariness and depression, from the kiss of one of the convalescent children—as some say—or from a momentary dropping of her head upon her husband's pillow, which is perhaps the more authentic account. She had taken all necessary precautions while her cares were still needed at so many sick beds, but, worn out at last with fatigue and relief, forgot everything for one fatal moment, in the weakness of returning hope. So it is said; but she must have been penetrated by the poison during days and nights of sleepless anxiety and watching, which took from her all strength to resist when at last it seized her. The mausoleum which the Queen had built for Prince Albert at Frogmore had been completed only a short time before, a building full of tender meaning and the fond desire to bring a semblance of brightness to the tomb. There the monument of Princess Alice and her dead infants has been placed by the side of the father whom she loved in the innermost sanctuary of sorrow and worship, the Queen's own chosen place of rest.

Another great blow was the death of Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany, the one delicate member of a robust family, who had from his childhood been the object of constant care and many apprehensions. It was hoped, however, that he had outgrown his constitutional delicacy and might with safety enter into the responsibilities of life, and he had been married in April, 1882, and it was hoped had a happy life before him, though he might never be so strong a man as his brothers. It was hoped also



Photo: Russell & Sons, Windsor.

FUNERAL OF THE DUKE OF CLARENCE: MOURNING WREATHS IN THE ALBERT MEMORIAL CHAPEL.

that he was to be the member of the family who should inherit the more intellectual side of the Prince Consort's character, and be the patron of literature and the arts. That he had himself entertained doubts whether he should be able to fulfil these hopes seems to be apparent from some sad terms in a letter written during his short married life. "Should anything happen to me, do not mourn for the dead, but live for the living," the young man said. It might be but a momentary failing of courage, or it might be a serious presentiment. At all events, he fulfilled his own prophetic thought and died not two years after his marriage, in the spring of 1884. A member of the Court said to a distinguished clergyman, while gazing at the sad countenance of the Queen in the midst of the mournful pageant of the funeral, "She has looked for this for thirty years."

These two, however, who now seem, since death has hallowed their names, to have been the most cherished of the band, are the only members of the family whom the Queen has been called upon to relinquish. The other seven have lived to be the supporters and consolers of their mother, pillars of her throne. The tragic end of the German Emperor, so shortly after his accession, was a heavy blow, and his wife, the eldest and most gifted of her Majesty's daughters, the Empress Frederick, has needed and received in ample measure in her time her Majesty's support and comfort; but for her other children life has been prosperous and full of happiness. The death of Prince Albert Victor of Wales, the Duke of Clarence, was a singular and sad exception to the general well-being, and no calamity could have touched the Crown more nearly. But great as the loss was of the heir to the kingdom, his vacant place has been filled up, and the succession stands more fast than ever in the direct line.

The Queen, however, has had other griefs to bear in her later years which are common to all who live a longer life than their fellows. She has seen her friends and counsellors drop from her side as the years went on, now one, now another, upon whom she relied most for comfort and aid. The ministers who served and guided her youth have all passed away in the course of nature; but of her younger counsellors, less aged than herself, how many have been cut off from her, some necessitating a complete change in her most intimate surroundings, such a change as is painful at any period of life, but how much more in old age when we cling to all that is habitual, and most of all to the solace of old servants, old friends, those who know us and all our ways!

Not to go through the long chronicle of loss, one only may be mentioned in Sir Henry Ponsonby, who was the Queen's right hand for many years, a man devoted to her service, knowing everything, understanding everything from the affairs of State to rules of royal punctilio and those of social arrangements

about which her Majesty was always warmly interested, that everything should be done by order and precedent. His lamented death caused a complete revolution in the closest circles of her surroundings, two younger men, no doubt most valuable and faithful, but new, having been put into the conjoined offices which so trusted a friend and supporter had filled in his own person. Such a loss as this, affecting the Queen's daily habits and long-established routine, as well as her affection and confidence in those she had cause to esteem so highly, was a very great misfortune, and, though perhaps scarcely any other loss could be felt so deeply as this, the number of friends whom the Queen has lost is unusually great. It is the penalty of long life, but demanded of her Majesty in more than the ordinary degree. She expresses this sense of loss with great pathos and tenderness in a letter addressed to the Rev. W. W. Tulloch on the death of his father, Principal Tulloch, of St. Andrews. "I have again lost a dear and honoured friend," the Queen says, "and my heart sinks within me when I think I shall not again on earth look on that noble presence, that kind face, and listen to those words of wisdom and Christian large-heartedness which used to do me so much good. . . . *No more! Never again!* Those dreadful words I have so often had to repeat make my heart sick. God's will be done! I have lost so many and I feel so alone." These words are very simple, very true, and convey to the reader something more than mere regret and sympathy, a sense of that desolation that makes itself felt around the long-lived, emptying the world of so many familiar faces, leaving a void wherever the eyes turn. It is the saddest aspect of age, one of the most melancholy drawbacks of a long life, even when the places thus vacated are not of the nearest and most dear. Though we may be safe in our most intimate relations, how sore is the blank made by the withdrawal of those with whom we have been accustomed for years to talk over all our concerns, to take counsel with and receive confidences from, and with whom we have interchanged habitually the thoughts of our hearts. Thus, even when we keep those we love best, we lose our companions, our associates, those who understand us and whom we understand, a deprivation which never can be made up in this life.

The Queen has taken back her place at the head of the nation to a considerable degree during the later chapters of her life. She has opened several Parliaments, she has appeared on various great national occasions, she has reopened her house, at least in Windsor; though nothing seems able to induce her ever to return, save for a few days, to Buckingham Palace, or to make her presence felt in general society. But all the austerity of her seclusion has happily disappeared, and she restrains her own personal distaste for the noise and commotion of a crowd, in order to please all classes of her people—the poor, by appearing in the streets and public places, the centre of beautiful processions and ceremonials; the rich and great, by holding drawing-rooms and

other trivial but, in their way, important functions in which, as has been already said, the appearance of the aged Queen proves far more attractive and more satisfactory than that of the most beautiful and beloved of princesses, even the *débutantes* feeling themselves shorn of half their honours when it is not the Sovereign herself to whom they make their courtesies. Now and then, chiefly at a garden party, her Majesty even appears in society, and, though the *onus* of entertainment on such occasions has been left, as was very natural, upon the Prince and Princess of Wales and the other members of the family, the Queen has resumed her reception of royal and noble visitors at Windsor, and held banquets and given entertainments in their honour. She has even permitted herself some return to the amusements of her youth, and though she has never again crossed the threshold of a theatre, she has called to Windsor, on several occasions, the most distinguished actors to perform before her—seeing in this way some of the most ambitious and some of the most amusing productions of the modern stage.

Nor has old age produced in her any slackening of exertion or relaxation of public duty. To make this consistent with necessary rest and fresh air, and such exercise as is possible, the hours of the day are so arranged as to alternate work with relaxation. Often, while at Windsor, she begins the day by a drive in her donkey chair, through the beautiful Home Park to Frogmore, where she breakfasts in the open air or in a tent, enjoying the freshness of the morning, and the sweetness of the woods and the lawns; though there is rarely absent a significant despatch box, containing what is the Queen's daily work, that continual supply of State papers which, important as they may be, are far from being light reading. After this little preface of the open air, which she always loves, her Majesty returns to a close morning's work with her Secretaries, when all important public business is gone over. Before the hour of luncheon she goes out again to take a drive. The luncheon midday meal is the most cheerful, the most expansive moment of the day, when the Queen is surrounded chiefly by her own children, and family matters are the principal subject of discussion and consultation. So abundant a family has, no doubt, many difficulties, as it has also many pleasant things to be talked over. In all that has been made visible to the public of the Queen's private diary and papers, and in the published letters of the Princess Alice, the crowd of Christian names (sometimes meaning the highest personages in Europe) is quite amusing. They seem to throng upon each other till the spectator can scarcely see through the crowd to the pleasant group at table, all telling the latest news of these friends and relatives, speculating what they will do next, laughing at a characteristic trait of this majesty or that. The same thing occurs, no doubt, in every large family; but few families are so large, or have so many largely extending ties, as that of the Queen.

To show how the most trivial circumstances mingle with the greatest in

the routine of a Court, it is said that one of the occupations of this cheerful table is to regulate and approve the Court Circular for the day, that little every-day record of visits and promenades, arrivals and departures, the pieces of music that are played after dinner, and other details. But it is one of the curious particulars of life that the most insignificant jostles the most important, and it is scarcely possible to say which takes up the most time and occupies the most thought. The hand that has just signed decrees and official proclamations to move a world corrects with as much gravity the



Photo: Gunn and Stuart, Sloane Street, W.

"OFTEN WHILE AT WINDSOR SHE BEGINS THE DAY BY A DRIVE IN HER DONKEY CHAIR" (p. 152).

little slip of that small dry chronicle of the comings and goings, the drives and the dinners.

After this family repast, the Queen is accustomed to spend an hour or two much as the head of a large establishment would do anywhere. She writes her family letters, which are an important feature of the occupations of every mother, and these are often not mere affairs of affection, but letters full of the greater interests which must mingle with everyday events in the correspondence of a Sovereign. It is said that the Queen expects to hear at least once a week from all her children, and is herself very regular in her replies, so that this in itself adds a considerable item to her employments. She is, besides, very ready and gracious in notes to less important persons, and is understood to like receiving letters from those who can in any sense of the word be called friends. The early hours of the

afternoon would seem to have been appropriated by her Majesty to the writing and reading which with many lesser women are considered enough to fill the whole day, the only portion of her time that could be called private. She afterwards goes out again for a long drive. The dinner hour is very late, never before nine o'clock. It is seldom that meal is confined to members of the family, as in an ordinary house; guests, generally distinguished either by rank or celebrity, constantly mingle with the royal party, including all foreign visitors of sufficient note. They assemble in the corridor, which is one of the most interesting parts of the Castle at Windsor, full of beautiful furniture and fine pictures: among which not the least are the many Court pictures commemorating incidents in her Majesty's life—from the pretty simplicity of the first Council, to the elaborate reproductions of Court splendour, fine dresses, and magnificence, in the series of marriages and of christenings—which line the walls. Mingled with them are one of the most beautiful collections extant of the works of Canaletto, the great Venetian painter, and many portraits, interesting in some instances. In this softly lighted gallery, with banks of flowers at every turn, the invited guest awaits the coming of the Queen.

But when the meal is over, and the Queen has spoken a gracious word once more in the corridor to her guests, it is not to rest that her Majesty retires. Again the despatch box appears, which never is long out of the foreground, and the Queen once more sits down to the perusal of papers, remaining far into the night, like any poor author, over her work. The Queen herself told the present writer that it was often two o'clock in the morning before her task was done, a statement which received the most amusing confirmation and comment some time afterwards in the grumbling and lamentation of one of the servants in the Castle whose office it was to put out the lamps throughout the private apartments. He had fallen asleep while waiting, and, failing to wake in time to perform his duty, had been reprimanded and finally dismissed, and found himself compelled to seek humbler service. "How," he cried indignantly, "could they expect a man to keep awake for half the night?" The young footman could not do it, but the aged Queen did. The servant nodded outside, the little town slept below, when the Queen, full of great thoughts of Empire, went to her repose, all the rest of the world asleep, as she might well have believed, looking out from that royal height over the silent masses of building, the red roofs and the great plain below—all at rest except herself, the mother and mistress of all.

The watch thus kept was but a symbol of the vigilance with which the Queen watches and notes everything that goes on throughout the country. We have been told that it was her Majesty's determination to have every untoward accident inquired into which originated the system now in use, by which every public catastrophe becomes immediately the subject of close examination. The knowledge on every side that the Queen's first question

will be, "How did it happen--what was the cause?" is a continual warning and stimulant both to them on whom the responsibility lies of all great works employing numbers of men, and to those whose business it is to inquire into every accident. How did it happen? The Queen's query, which was the first thing certain in every such lamentable business, overawed all careless officials. It is known that, whatever Government or its representatives might wink at, there would be no cessation of that royal question till all was made clear.

Perhaps it is scarcely in good taste to comment upon the Queen's personal appearance, but it may be well to attempt a rectification in this respect. Many of her photographs, and the statues executed in later years, give an expression which has been interpreted as "cross" by superficial observers. This arises solely from the conformation of the face, unnoticed in her prime, which, giving a certain projection to the lower jaw throws into the close shut mouth an air almost of discontent and dissatisfaction. But the spectator has but to see the Queen's



AWAITING AN AUDIENCE IN THE CORRIDOR, WINDSOR CASTLE.

countenance melt in personal intercourse, the smile which lights up the face, the kindness that inspires it, to perceive how false is this impression. It is unfortunate, for it belies her Majesty with the widest circle of all, those to whom she was but a momentary vision as she passed, and who cannot know by any experience of their own how far this aspect of the Queen's countenance in repose is from its real meaning. There is, perhaps, no one to be met with in society, even among those much

inferior in rank, who has the gift of putting a humble visitor at his or her ease so entirely as the Queen. She is herself so perfectly natural that she calls out in others, wherever that is possible, the same melting away of everything artificial, difficult as it may be for ordinary mortals not to put on something, either of pretension or humbleness, which they might hope would ingratiate them with the Queen.

One of the many anonymous pieces of information which abound concerning her Majesty's history says: "The Queen likes two classes of people, those of rank who keep strictly within the limits of Court etiquette—for which she is a great stickler—and those who are no respecters of persons, who neither flatter nor cringe, who will report, or gossip, or repeat an amusing anecdote—such as the Scotch peasants or the more confidential servants of the royal household." This is a very poor rendering indeed of the Queen's habits of mind and manner, exhibiting her as the centre of a prim and curtseying circle on one hand, and a lover of gossip and little tales on the other. As a matter of fact, the Queen loves people who are natural, not too much overawed, not presuming, those who would consent to be themselves in her presence as she is always herself, clear-sighted, humorous, full of perception of character. The number of her Majesty's attachments among the people about her, her friends unfeignedly, in all classes, but chiefly among those who have a right to surround a throne (many names of noble ladies start immediately to the memory in connection with the Queen, suggesting no strict preservation of the limits of Court etiquette, but the most warm and natural interchange of feeling), as well as among the cottagers who knew no ceremony at all—disprove so stilted a description. The Queen is one of those who know instinctively a friend when she sees him, and has the power of communicating that fine freemasonry of souls. We remember a speech made by one of her Majesty's most intimate companions to a lady, a writer who had pleased the Queen by some reviews of her first book, which seemed to show more comprehension of its naturalness and character than was general, but who turned out to be already known to the Queen. "Ah!" said the Duchess, "we thought it was a new friend, but you are a friend already."

To take another branch of the same subject, we have heard a physician say that the Queen shows a genuine, if partly amused, pleasure in being ordered, according to a doctor's right, to do this or that. To be spoken to with authority is an agreeable novelty which she much appreciates. Indeed, we believe it is the Queen's chief desire to find those that are natural, whose sentiments are to be relied on. As for those who keep strictly within the limits of Court etiquette, we presume they are left there, to curtsy at their leisure. Her Majesty loves to find friends, however great or however humble, warm hearts and minds that understand. And she has what may be called a love of gossip, if any unfriendly critic pleases, a

delightful inclination to hear all about them, to know their ways, and what they do, their families, their children, those things which we all love to open our hearts upon whenever we have any confidence of finding interest and sympathy. As she knows the descent and lineage of everyone upon the golden level of those who have lineage and descent to be known, so she is



AFTERNOON TEA.

often found to know more about the humblest acquaintance than they are in the least aware of, and follow the alliances and connections of the cottagers as she does of the dukes, taking the same interest in them. Above rank herself in solitary pre-eminence, she loves rank, which is part of the royal system in which she moves and has her being, but loves humanity more, wherever found.

This is the character, and this the record, of Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India, a monarch more beloved and honoured than has ever been in this loyal but critical island before. In her old age

she has become to her people perfect, and can do no wrong; and perhaps her old age has been in many ways her happiest period, certainly the happiest next to that of her married life. Her sorrows are calmed, her sons and her daughters are prosperous and beloved, their children fill the earth and surround her throne, her chair, her carriage, wherever she goes, with a band of smiling girls and strong young men. Between herself and her people there is not the shadow of a doubt on either side: they are aware that their good is always at her heart the chief thing in life, that nothing can happen to the multitude that would pass unnoticed by her vigilant and tender eye; and the Queen knows that she could do nothing in which they did not take a part, ever anxious to greet her wherever she appeared, to applaud and to approve every act and every word. Now and then she sends a message to the people, which is always so simple, so full of reason, so full of feeling, that the humblest understand and agree. She has reigned longer than any previous King or Queen of England, and if there might be some more glorious, it is very sure that there has been none so universally honoured and beloved.



THE QUEEN'S SEAL OF STATE.
(Counterseal.)

NOTE.

MRS. OLIPHANT did not live to complete to the present hour the sketch of the Queen's personal and family life which has occupied the foregoing pages; but everything that has happened since the gifted writer passed away has justified her estimate of her Majesty's character, and of the manner in which she fulfils the duties of her high station. The Diamond Jubilee—which brought to London, for the first time in its history as a city, the full representation of all the diverse parts of the greatest realm the world has ever known—seemed to throw into a fuller light and prominence the Queen's relationship to all her subjects throughout her world-wide Empire. Whilst London, on that memorable June day, acclaimed the Sovereign who had ruled for sixty years with an exuberant enthusiasm that proved how completely she had conquered the heart of her capital, her own simple message to her people showed in what light she regarded her relation to them: "From my heart I thank my beloved people. May God bless them." No royal message was ever more simple or more womanly. It came from one heart, and at once it found its way into the hearts of countless millions. Nothing was more touching in the story of that unparalleled national festival than the account of the reception of the Queen's message, carried with the speed of lightning round the globe, by the far-scattered family to whom it was addressed. "It brought the tears to our eyes," wrote one, who read it posted up in a railway station on the lonely African veldt; and it brought forth not only tears but a throb of joyous emotion among the children of the great Mother Country wherever they were to be found—under the burning sun of the tropics, in distant Canadian forests, in busy Australasian cities. The Queen once again had done the right thing in the right way, and her words of affectionate recognition and reciprocation of the love of her people only seemed to quicken the love and reverence in which she was held by all.

It might well have seemed to everyone that this was the culmination of her long reign in the hearts of her subjects—the highest point of enthusiastic devotion to which even she could ever hope to attain. But since the great day of Jubilee fresh trials have been in store for our Queen, and out of these fresh trials she has reaped new triumphs. As a Queen she has had to see another great war shatter for the moment the peace of her realm. Of the trial to which this fierce ordeal has exposed her woman's heart we need not speak; but the woman, not less than the Queen, has been revealed to us in the manner in which she has faced that ordeal. Her tender care for her soldiers and for their wives and children has been all pure womanly. Never before did she make herself so completely one with her people as in the dark days of the winter of 1899, when disasters fell in swift succession on her

troops, and a jealous world made haste to announce that the oft-threatened and ever-deferred downfall of her Empire was at hand. Not for one moment did the Queen's heart fail then. But whilst she bore herself to the outer world with the serene courage, of her character and office, she gave herself up to the womanly task of comforting both those who went out to defend her standard with their blood and those whom they left at home to weep and pray. Her Christmas party at Windsor was devoted to the wives and children of the soldiers who had been quartered there before they were summoned to the field; and the humble wife of the private soldier knew that the great Queen had the same feeling of motherly sympathy for her as for the wife of the most brilliant general in the Army. She wished to give a present to each individual soldier, and, though the present was simple and of slight intrinsic value, it was received by all in the spirit in which the son in a far-off land receives the gift of the mother whom he loves. In those dark days that were happily soon to pass away she made up her mind that instead of going, according to her wont in recent years, to the South of Europe to escape the rigours of an English spring, she would remain among her own people. No insistence on the part of doctors and personal friends sufficed to change her mind. She came to London in March, 1900, to spend three days in the heart of her Empire, and she had her reward in an outburst of passionate enthusiasm that cast into the shade even the memorable demonstration of the Diamond Jubilee, and astounded the critical nations of Europe, who knew only too well how great was the contrast between this display of heartfelt devotion and loyalty in a time of sore trial and that which, under the like conditions, would have been witnessed among themselves. Finally, as though to show how complete was her trust in every class and section of her people, she made up her mind that her spring visit, in this year of effort and sacrifice, should be paid to Ireland instead of to the Riviera; and going there she met with a welcome which must have compensated her a hundredfold for the loss of the warm sunshine of the South. The year 1900 may have been a critical one for the British Empire; but it has at least drawn the Queen and her people more closely together than ever before, and has shown to all the world that her throne is broad-based, not merely upon her people's will, but upon the passionate loyalty, love, and adoration with which more than threescore years of womanly and yet royal devotion to duty has inspired them.



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